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THIRTY  
LETTERS

ON  
VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY  
*WILLIAM JACKSON.*

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THE THIRD EDITION,  
WITH CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONS.

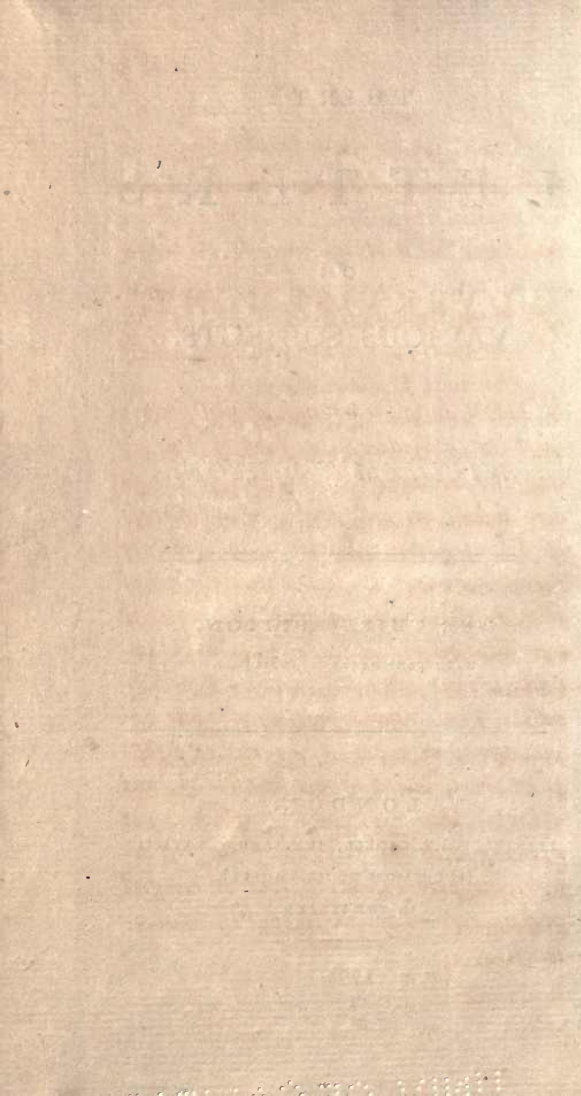
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## ADVERTISEMENT.

*WHEN* an unknown author presents his work to the public, the form of Letters has some advantages: It seems to excuse deep definition, and admits of a looseness of style as properly suited to an epistolary correspondence. But when it is discovered that the letters are not real, the reader is less disposed to make allowances.—He expects greater regularity and more correctness. The author, conscious of these expectations, in endeavouring not to disappoint them, abates of his familiarity, and arranges his arguments; which, not agreeing with the freedom of the first design, his book becomes a kind of mongrel performance—more correct, but less characteristic.

*Notwithstanding the above remark, in other respects this will be found superior to the first and second editions—many passages have been omitted which might always have been spared, but more have been added to subjects treated too briefly. One letter is entirely new.*

*Upon the revisal of this work, some expressions were found innocent which have incurred censure, and others really faulty which have escaped it—the latter it is hoped are amended; but in respect of the former, permit me to say, in the words of a late writer—“ Pour toute réponse, j’ai étendu mes idées et mes réflexions en les frappant d’une manière plus haute et plus décidée; laissant au temps, dont je connois les effets, le soin de mettre mes opinions à leur place.”*

LETTER

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# LETTERS.

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## LETTER I.

**SINCE** you request that our correspondence should be out of the beaten track, be it so. My retirement from the world will naturally give an air of peculiarity to my sentiments, which perhaps may entertain where it does not convince.

In justice to myself, let me observe, that truth sometimes does not strike us without the assistance of custom; but so great is the force of custom, that, unassisted by truth, it has worked the greatest miracles. Need I bring for proof the quantity of nonsense in all the arts, sciences, and even religion itself, which it has sanctified?

As possibly in the course of my letters to you I may attack some received doctrines on each of these subjects; let not what I advance be instantly rejected, because contrary to an opinion founded on prejudice; but, as much as possible, divest yourself of the partiality acquired by habit, and if at last you should not agree with me, I shall suspect my sentiments to be peculiar, and not just.

Tho' truth may want the assistance of use before we feel its force, yet when it is really felt, we reject what custom only made us approve. The difficulty is to procure for truth a fair examination. The multitude is always against it. The first discovery in any thing is considered as an encroachment upon property, a property become sacred by possession. Discoverers are accordingly treated as criminals, and must have good luck to escape execution.

I mean

I mean not to rank myself with such bold adventurers ; I am neither ambitious of the honour, nor the danger, of enlightening the world ; but if I can soften prejudices which I cannot remove—if I can loosen the fetters of custom where I cannot altogether unbind them, and engage you to think for yourself—my end will be answered, and my trouble fully repaid.

Adieu! &c.

## LETTER II.

\* \* \* \* \*

**I**T is natural to suppose, that people originally judged of things by their senses and immediate perceptions. By degrees they found that their senses were not infallible, and that things frequently contradicted their first appearance.

This, at last, was pushed to an extravagance; and certain philosophers endeavoured to persuade mankind, that the senses deceive us so often, that we can never depend on them—that we cannot tell whether we are in motion or at rest, asleep or awake, with many other such absurdities.

They used the same ingenuity with the mental sense. Some ancient sage was  
I
asked,

asked, "Who is the richest man?" If he had replied, "He that has most money," the answer would have been natural and just—what he did say every one knows. We have suffered ourselves to be imposed on so long, that at last we begin to impose on ourselves.

Riches, cards, and duelling, have furnished constant topics for abuse, to divines and moralists; and yet men will still hoard, play, and fight. Why should we obey our feelings rather than precepts perpetually inculcated?

All universal passions we may fairly pronounce to be natural, and should be treated with respect. The gratification of our passions are our greatest pleasures, and he that has most gratifications is of course the happiest man. This, as a general assertion, is true, and it is true also in particulars; provided we pay no more for pleasure than it is worth.

Every

Every man should endeavour to be rich. He that has money may possess every thing that is transferable—this is a sufficient inducement to procure it. Nay, if he possesses nothing but his money, if he considers it as the end, as well as the means, it is still right to be rich ; for, knowing that he has it in his power to procure every thing, he is as well satisfied as if the thing itself was in his possession.

This is the true source of the miser's pleasure ; and a great pleasure it is ! A moral philosopher may tell him, “ that man does not live for himself alone, and that he hurts the community by withholding what would be of use to it ”—this he thinks to be weak reasoning. The sneers of wits signify as little ; for he knows they would be glad to be rich if they could. He feels that the pleasure arising from the possession of riches, whether used or not, is too great to be given

up

up for all the ridicule, or even the strongest arguments that can be brought against it.

If so much may be said in defence of avarice as a general principle, much more may be advanced in its favour when it is the passion of age. It is a natural wish to enjoy something.—Love is our pursuit in youth—ambition in middle life—there is nothing left for an old man, but the desire of possessing money ; of which he is as jealous as he ever was of his mistress, and most unwillingly resigns it to his successor, whom he considers as his rival,

It seems to be agreed, that card-playing proceeds entirely from avarice—tho' this may sometimes be the motive, yet it may with more probability be derived from other, and more general principles.

The

The mind of man naturally requires employment, and that employment is most agreeable, which engages, without fatiguing the attention. There is nothing for this purpose of such universal attraction as cards. The fine arts and belles lettres can only be enjoyed by those who have a genius for them—other studies and amusements have their particular charm, but cards are the universal amusement in every country where they are known.—The alternate changes in the play, the hope upon the taking up a new hand, and the triumph of getting a game, made more compleat from the fear of losing it, keep the mind in a perpetual agitation, which is found by experience to be too agreeable to be quitted for any other consideration. The stake played for is a quickener of these sensations, but not the cause. Children who play for nothing, feel what I have been describing, perhaps in a more exquisite degree, than those who game for thousands. A state of inaction is  
of

of all others the most dreadful ! and it is to avoid this inaction that we seek employment, though at the expence of health, temper, and fortune.

This subject is finely touched by Abbé du Bos, in his reflexions upon poetry, &c. indeed he carries it so far as to say, that the pleasure arising from an extraordinary agitation of the mind, is frequently so great as to stifle humanity ; and from hence arises the entertainment of the common people at executions, and of the better sort at tragedies. Although in this last instance he may be mistaken ; yet, the delight we feel in reading the actions of a hero may be referred to this cause. The moralist censures the taste of those who can be pleased with the actions of an Alexander or a Nadir Shah—the Truth is, we do not approve the actions ; but the relation of them causes that agitation of the mind which we find to be so pleasant. The reign of Henry the seventh,  
tho'

tho' of the greatest consequence to this nation, does not interest us like the contentions of York and Lancaſter, by which the kingdom was ruined. In vain are we told that ſcenes of war and bloodſhed can give no pleaſure to a good mind, and that the true hero is he who cultivates the arts of peace, whoſe ſtudies and employments confer benefits on mankind, not procure their deſtruction. It is to no purpoſe—we ſleep over the actions of quiet goodneſs; while aſpiring, deſtroying greatneſs, claims and commands our attention\*.

Duelling has in many countries a law againſt it—but will never be prevented,

The

\* A great writer has remarked that “ the exploits of conquerors who have deſolated the earth, and the freaks of tyrants who have rendered nations unhappy, are recorded with minute, and often *diſguſting* accuracy, while the diſcovery of uſeful arts, and the

The law can inflict no greater penalty for any breach of it than death ; which the duellist contemns.—There are also some cases of injury which laws cannot prevent, nor punish when committed—these must be redressed by the man who suffers, and by him *only*. He is prompted to do this by something antecedent, and superior to all law, and by a desire as eager as hunger or lust ; so that it is as easy for laws to prevent or restrain the two latter as the former. Very luckily for us, occasions for the gratifications of this passion occur but seldom : and tho' a man may be restrained from a duel by personal fear, which is its only counteractor, there

the progress of the most beneficial branches of commerce are passed over in silence and suffered to sink into oblivion. The preceding observations may shew that we are not *disgusted*, but, on the contrary, much interested and delighted by the accuracy and minuteness of such records. Perhaps the warm asser-tion of a great military character, tho' enthusiastic, is not far beyond the truth.—“ War calls forth the noblest feelings of the human heart.”

are

are very few instances, perhaps none, of its being prevented by considering it as a breach of the law.

In the beginning of the last century duels were so frequent, particularly in France, as to occasion a severe edict to prevent them—indeed by their frequency, they were by degrees improved into combats of two, three, and sometimes more of a side.—In those days a French nobleman was making up his party to decide a quarrel with another person of equal rank ; it came to the King's ears, who sent to him one of the most rising men at court with a command to desist, assuring him of the strict execution of the edict in case of disobedience.—Every one knows the attachment the French once had to their sovereign, but yet it proved weak when set against this all-powerful passion. The nobleman not only refused to obey the King, but actually

tually engaged the messenger to be one of his party.

The above seem to be the principal reasons why riches, cards, and duelling have so deep a root in the mind of man—but there are others which come in aid. The desire of superiority is of itself almost sufficient to produce this great effect.

Believe me ever yours, &c.

LETTER

## LETTER III.

I Cannot comply with your desire—a regular dissertation is above me—but if you will take my thoughts as they occur, the honour of methodizing them shall be yours.

Languages are termed rough and smooth, weak or expressive, frequently without reason.—As these are comparative terms, they change their application according to circumstances. The French is said to be a smooth or rough language, when compared with the German or Italian. Perhaps this is true; and yet we should not determine too hastily. In appearance there are more vowels in the Italian language than in the French: but in pronunciation the French lose many consonants,

sonants, and the Italians none : yet in French, from irregularities incident to all languages, there is sometimes an effect of consonants pronounced, which are not written—smoothness or roughness must therefore depend on the ear alone ; yet how far a language is weak or expressive, may be treated of and determined with precision.

Every sentence may be considered as the picture of an idea ; the quicker that picture is presented to the mind, the stronger is its impression. That language then which is shortest, is the most expressive. If we should fix on any language as being in general the most concise, yet, if in some instances it is more diffuse than another, then, in those instances the latter is most expressive. This, I believe, is an universal rule, and without exception.

Let

Let us for the present suppose Latin to be more expressive, because shorter, than any modern language, and compare it with English in some examples, just as they occur. *Captus oculis* and *cæcus* are used for the same thing—the last is more expressive than the first, and both less so than *blind*: a single syllable does the office of many. How much more forcibly does it strike us to be told that our friend is dead, than *mortuus est*, or *Mors continuo ipsum occupavit*? This last is indeed poetical, if we suppose death a person.

Translations, are usually more verbose than their original, which is one reason for their weakness; whenever they are less so, they are stronger. Suppose we should find in a French author these phrases, *Un Canon de neuf livres de Balle*—*Un Vaisseau du Roi du quatre vingt dix Pieces du Canon*; and they were rendered into English by a *nine-pounder*—*A ninety-gun ship*—is not the translation more spirited

rited than the original ? I purposely chose a phrase with as little matter in it as possible, where the meaning could not be mistaken, and in which there was no variety of expression, that the trial might be fairer.

Although I just now said that Latin was closer in its expression than any modern language, it was only in compliance with common opinion ; for there is some reason to believe that it yields in this respect to English : the Latin hexameter and Terence's line being with ease included in our heroic verse, which is not so long by many syllables. Many pieces of English poetry have been translated into Latin, and, when compared with the original, nothing can read more dead and inanimated. To save the trouble of referring to examples, I shall give an instance from one of the best poets of

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the

the age, which is more to the purpose  
as the translation is his own.

The nymph must lose her female friend.

If more admir'd than she ;

But where will fierce contention end,

If flow'rs can disagree ?

*Heu inimicitias quoties parit æmula forma !*

*Quam raro pulchræ, pulchra placere potest ?*

*Sed fines ultrà solitos discordia tendit*

*Cum flores ipsos bilis et ira movent.*

Take another example from the same  
ingenious author—it is a translation of  
Prior's *Chloe and Euphelia*,

The merchant, to secure his treasure,

Conveys it in a borrow'd name ;

Euphelia serves to grace my measure,

But Chloe is my real flame.

*Mercator, vigiles oculos ut fallere possit,*

*Nomine sub ficto trans mare mittit opes ;*

*Lenè sonat liquidumque meis Euphelia chordis,*

*Sed solam exoptant te, mea vota, Chlœe.*

Observe, how the same thought is  
strong

strong in English and weak in Latin, occasioned entirely by its being close in one language, and diffuse in the other : for as much as a sentence exceeds another in length, in the same proportion does it fail in expression.

I have heard that the German is an expressive language—I do not understand it ; but I can perceive that, for the most part, the words are very long, which makes against its being so. French and Italian particularly, are generally more diffuse than English. Translations from these languages have often a force that the originals wanted ; and this not owing to the English being a stronger language in *sound*, as some have supposed, for the Italian is the most sonorous of any, but to strength occasioned by brevity.

It has been observed, that there is no language which so abounds in monosyllables as the English ; and this is generally mentioned as a defect ; but, if the

foregoing remarks be true, it is rather an excellence. Those writers who affect the *verba sesquipedalia*, lose more by delaying to present the idea to the mind, than they gain by filling the mouth with pompous syllables,

The three languages of Europe in which most works of imagination and taste are written, have, when compared with the others, the shortest words and sentences. On the contrary, some savage tongues have more syllables to express the number *one*, than we use to get as far as *ten*. May we not from hence conclude, that brevity is one characteristic of a cultivated language?

Perhaps it may be imagined, that those words which carry their signification with them should be most expressive, whether long or short; that is, when they are derived from, or compounded of known words, which express that signification.

But this is not so. When we say, *adieu*, *farewell*—we mean no more than a ceremony at parting.—No one considers *adieu*\* as a recommendation to God, or *farewell* as a wish for happiness.—Frequent use destroys all idea of derivation. But if we speak a compound or self-significative word that is not common, we perceive the derivation of it. Thus if a Londoner says *butter milk*, he has the idea of something compounded of *butter* and *milk*; but to an Irishman or Hollander, it is as simple an idea as either of the words taken separately, is to us.

It is but of late that our orthography was fixed, even in the most common words. Two hundred years ago, every person spelt as he liked, a privilege enjoyed still later than that period by “royal

\* “Prononce *Amen*, donne ton ame à Dieu—  
Non, répondit le maraud à tonsure,  
Je suis damné, je vais au diable, *adieu* !”

VOLTAIRE.

and

and noble authors," who seem, in this instance, to claim the liberty enjoyed by their ancestors.\* Since the time orthography has been thought of some consequence, we have attended partly to pronunciation, tho' chiefly to derivation. But, in some cases, where we should altogether have spelt according to derivation, we have taken pronunciation for our guide. And this has occasioned some confusion; for instance *naught* is *bad*—*nought* is *nothing*; these terms were long confounded, and even now are not kept perfectly distinct, which has occasioned *ought* to be written *aught*. *Wrapt* is enveloped—*rapt* is hurried away, or totally possessed: the first of these has been used for the last, by one of the correctest of our modern poets.† *Marry* is an af-

\* This was written just after the publication of a correspondence which gave ample occasion for the remark.

† " Since wrapt Musæus tun'd his parting lay."  
feveration

feveration—*marry*, to give in marriage—the spelling these words the same, confounds them together; we should have preserved for the first, the real word *mary*. It was a common thing formerly to swear by *Mary*, the *a* in which was pronounced broad, as the Priests of that time did the Latin *Maria*, from whom the common people took the pronunciation. In one of the pieces in the first volume of the collection of old plays, it frequently occurs, and is spelt as a proper name, *Marie*. Permit me to observe, that the editor, by modernizing the spelling in the other volumes, has prevented their being made this use of, as they might have shewed the progress of orthography as well as of dramatic poetry.

In the reign of James the first were many attempts to reduce orthography altogether to pronunciation. In our time we have seen some attempts to bring it altogether from derivation—but surely both were  
wrong.

wrong. Whoever reads Howel's letters, or Dr. Newton's Milton, will see, that by a partial principle too generally adopted, they have made of the English language "a very fantastical banquet—just so many strange dishes!"

There are many inversions of phrases used in poetry which are contrary to the genius of our language. In Pope's translation of the Iliad there frequently occurs "thunders the sky,"—"totters the ground," meaning that "the sky thunders," and "the ground totters." This change of position has the authority of some of our best poets, tho' it frequently obscures the sense, and sometimes makes it directly contrary to what is intended to be expressed. Our language does not, with ease, admit of the nominative, after the verb. If we read, tho' in poetry, "shakes the ground," we do not readily understand that "the ground shakes," but rather refer to some antecedent nominative that has produced this effect. To  
adopt

adopt the construction of the ancient languages is as awkward as to adopt their measures. You will understand this to be meant as a general observation, the truth of which is not destroyed by a few exceptions where the inversion may be happily used. The sense in these verses of Pope “halts” as much by Roman construction, as the Rhythmus in Sydney does by “Roman feet.\*”

In reading Latin and Greek we are obliged to keep the sense suspended until we come to the end of the period, but it is not so in any modern tongue with which I am acquainted, except now and then in Italian poetry ; so that there is a sameness of construction in all of them when compared with the ancient languages. Now, this suspension of the sense is surely no advantage ; therefore if

\* “ And Sydney’s verse halts ill on Roman feet.”

it were possible to make English like Latin and Greek in this respect, it would hurt the language.

In another letter I may possibly resume this subject, which is capable of much curious disquisition.

I am, &c.

LETTER

## LETTER IV.

OUR greatest mistake in the pursuit of happiness as well as of science, is to judge by the perceptions of others, and not by our own. This perversion is admirably ridiculed in some comedy, in which a young fellow naturally sober, gives into debaucheries merely because they are fashionable. “ I am horrid sick”—says he—“ I am tired to death—I hate cards—but it is *life* for all that!”

This word, if one could know the truth, has probably occasioned much more pain than pleasure. There are so few who are qualified to undergo the fatigue of dissipation, that our places of public resort are mostly filled by those who only go because it is the fashion.

At

At a masquerade where a thousand persons assemble in order to be happy, it would be difficult to select fifty that have a real enjoyment of it—the rest go, because it is *life*. How few who walk the “never-ending, still-beginning” round of Ranelagh, but with longing eyes pass the door, and envy those who have resolution to make their exit?

The tax we pay to imitation is not levied in town only—it is full as high in the country, and paid with as much reluctance. But we are in all cases ashamed to obey the pathetic remonstrances of our honest feelings. Although they tell us that the pleasure of shooting is not equal to the pains, we do not quit the gun. Although the music of the dogs has not a charm sufficient to remove the fear of breaking one's neck, yet we gallop on. And although the “*impatient fisher*” still holds his rod extended, he longs to shorten

shorten it into a walking-stick, jemmy, and switch.

How many pretend to receive pleasure from pictures who have no eye—to feel raptures at music, that have no ear—and to be transported with the charms of poetry, tho', like Falstaff's recruits, they are pressed into the service "with hearts no bigger than pin's heads?"

"It is *taste*—it is *life* to do this"—but it is not *your* taste—however, all matters may be easily adjusted—here—

—————hinc Vos,

Vos hinc, mutatis discedite partibus—

Now confess honestly, Mr. Sportsman, that you have more pleasure in Snyder's pictures, than from hunting in propriâ personâ—that the French horns at a concert have more harmony than in a wood. And, Mr. Connoisseur, you are now in your element.—Is it not better to "join  
the

the jovial chace" than the insipid crew  
of the dilettanti?

Let us remember and practice the old  
maxim.

—trahit *sua* quemque Voluptas.

LETTER

## LETTER V.

Dear Sir,

I AM glad you go on with your painting. Though you should never arrive at any great degree of excellence yourself, it will infallibly make you a better judge of the excellencies of others. You tell me, what indeed every Connoisseur says by rote, that the great painters painted above, beyond nature! That they painted beyond nature I grant, but not above, if by above we are to understand something more excellent than what we find in nature. I have long been sick of the cant of writers and talkers upon this subject. If it be possible, let us speak a little common-sense—endeavour to shew what seems by our feelings to be the truth,

truth, and then prevent a wrong application of it.

The great painters, it is agreed, painted beyond nature—but how? Why, if I may venture to say it, by drawing and colouring extravagantly. But were they right or wrong in doing so? This depends upon circumstances. I remember seeing at a Painter's a head taken from nature, another copied from Hans Holbein, and a third from Giulio Romano—upon which the artist made a dissertation.—He first produced the portrait from nature, and asked me how I liked it? I told him that there appeared to me great simplicity and elegance in it, and an excellence which I thought essential to a good picture—a proper balance between the light and shade of every part. (I meant that the shade of the white was lighter than that of blue—of blue fainter than that of black, &c. so that each colour was as perceivable in the shadows as lights.) Ay, says he, that is true, but

but I will shew you a style preferable to it—Upon which he produced the copy from Holbein.—I agreed, that it was stronger, and such as nature might appear in many instances.—But here, says he, is something *beyond* nature; this I call the sublime style of painting, and this I will try to bring my heads to.—Then he discovered the copy from Giulio—there is strength, says he—see how faint the others are.—Now, acknowledge that the picture I painted from nature is nothing to it. It must be confessed, I replied, that the extravagance of the last picture does for a moment dazzle our eyes—yours seem weak by the comparison; it is looking upon white paper after staring at the sun.—On the contrary, if I pass from yours to this, I am hurt at seeing every thing so extravagant, and so far *beyond the modesty of nature!*——“ It is not intended to be strictly natural, it is the *fine ideal*; it is something above, beyond nature!”

I must own that I have no idea of any beauty beyond what may be found in nature—indeed, whence is the idea to be taken? But do not think I rate Giulio or any of the sublime painters lightly; I am so sensible of their merit, that, contrary perhaps to your expectation, I am about to defend their practice. They generally painted for churches, where the picture is seen in a bad light, or at a distance; so that it could not be seen at all if the manner was not violent: both the drawing and colouring must be extravagant to strike—for which reason, they overcharged their attitudes, blackened their shadows, reddened their carnations, and whitened their lights; and all this with the greatest propriety. But if you apply this practice to closet or portrait painting, what is an excellence in them, becomes a defect in you. This picture which you have copied with so much success, I dare say has an admirable effect where it hangs; but near the eye or  
in

in a strong light, it is hard and overdone. On the other hand, if your portrait was to be hung at a great distance, or in an obscure place, the delicate touches I now admire would escape the sight. The style proper for the church is improper for the closet, and the contrary. The great painters were in the right then, in painting *beyond nature*; but let us not imagine that such figures and characters are therefore the most beautiful. No painter can invent a figure surpassing the *finest* of nature: for character and form, nature is the *just* and *only* standard. He shews his genius more by properly associating natural objects, and expressing natural characters, than by exaggerating them or by inventing new ones.

This must not be understood as objecting to painters designing from ideas of general nature. Historical pictures which have some antient story for their subject, can only be so expressed: for if the fea-

tures, air, or dress were like what we daily see, the effect is destroyed, and the picture loses in dignity and consequence. Those circumstances of which we can have no precise idea, should be expressed *generally*, and something left to be supplied by the imagination, which always does much more for the artist, than he can possibly do for himself.

We are so used to expect *general* nature, that we do not soon relish historical pictures on modern subjects, because they cannot be painted upon that principle. Perhaps this kind of painting ought to be allowed principles of its own, and constitute a separate branch of the art.

It is not much disconnected from this subject, to remark the mistake of those artists who in their designs for plays, instead of exhibiting the character, give a portrait of the actor representing it.

Gravelot

Gravelot (in Theobald's Shakespeare) knew the impropriety of this and avoided it.

When I receive the picture you have promised me, I will criticise it with as much sincerity as

I am your Friend, &c.

LETTER

## LETTER VI.

**Y**OU have turned my thoughts much towards painting of late—I have been trying to solve this question.

What is the reason that those objects which displease us, or at best, that pass unnoticed, in nature, please us most in painting?

A deep road, a puddle of water, a bank covered with docks and briars, and an old tree or two, are all the circumstances in many a fine landscape. As clowns and half-starved cattle are the figures a landscape painter chuses for his pictures; so rough-looking fellows wrapt up in sheets and blankets, are chosen by the history-painter, to express the greatest per-

personages, and in the most dignified actions of their lives.

Let the following observations have what weight they may—tho' they do not clearly answer, they seem to throw some light on this difficult question.

1. While we are uncultivated, like the Irish Oscar, if we are to be awakened, it must be by having a great stone thrown against our heads. The man of the utmost elegance and refinement may remember the time when, in reading, nothing moved him but the marvellous; and in painting, nothing pleased him but the glaring. While he was in this state, he delighted in books of chivalry and Chinese pictures—these gave place to less extravagant representations of life; and at last by much converse with men of taste, reading purer authors, and seeing better pictures, he is taught how to feel, and finds a perfect revolution even in his  
 2 sensa-

sensations. Those objects which once delighted him, he now despises—others, on the contrary, he formerly took no notice of, he now sees with rapture; and even goes so far as to be pleased with the objects in nature, *he has learnt* to like in representation.—Now, it is this improved, tho' artificial, state of the mind that constitutes the judge of painting—and it is the judge the painter is solicitous to please.—He is to attain this end then, by departing as much as possible from what is our natural barbarous taste, and by conforming to that we have acquired.

2. It is most certain, that in all the arts we make difficulties in order to shew our skill in conquering them.—Some French writer calls this principle *la difficulté vaincue*; and this conquest is the source of much pleasure. What is it but this, that induces the novelist and play-writer to embarrass their characters with

with difficulties and troubles? What is there but this, that can induce a musician to bestow so much pains to compose a canon? and, to bring it to the present subject—what is it but this, that induces the painter to make use of the most unpromising objects, and produce beauty from the very circumstances that seem to promise nothing but disgust and deformity?

3. It is necessary that a painter should chuse such objects as are capable of variety either from shape or arrangement. Regular formal objects admit but little, especially those where art has the greatest share in their production; unless they are capable of motion, as ships, windmills, &c. and then they become picturesque by a proper choice of attitude. It is curious to observe the shifts to which artists are reduced, when they are obliged to paint such objects as are in themselves unpicturesque—suppose a fine house with  
avenues

avenues of trees. They will vary the tint of the stones in the one, and of the leaves in the other, or by throwing in accidental shades and lights produce a variety. In like manner, portrait-painters undress the hair, loosen the coat, and wrinkle the stockings that they may produce a variety in the *manner of treating* a subject which was wanting in its form.

Those objects which have no set form have of course most variety. A road, or river may wind in any direction—trees are of all sizes and shapes, may stand here or there—loose drapery admits a thousand folds and dispositions of which the stiff modern dress is incapable. So that the painter by taking these, has ample materials for shewing his judgment in form, or skill in arrangement—for making, and overcoming difficulties—and lastly, by the uniting both these, he conforms to the principles by which  
the

the cultivated taste is pleased—the ultimate end of all the fine arts.

If you are not satisfied with this solution, help me to a better—but give a fair reading to this of

Your sincere friend, &c.

LETTER

## LETTER VII.

**I** Do not admit your excuse.—A genius should never comply with *local* or *temporary* taste—instead of debasing himself to the people, he should elevate the people to him. When Milton subtilizes divinity, and Shakespeare “ cracks the wind of a poor phrase ;” who but wishes that those great poets had not descended from their sphere ?

Your allusions to incidents which must soon be forgotten, are only worthy of a writer who expects but a short existence. It is true our plays abound with such allusions. When Foigard, in the *Beaux Stratagem*, says he is a subject to the King of Spain—they ask him in a fury, “ which King of Spain ?” This did very well

well at the time ; but these two Kings of Spain are now of much less consequence than their brother monarchs of Brentford. I think it is in the same play where one of the characters is asked “ when he was at church last ? ” he should answer, “ at the coronation ; ” but it is a point to give a reply that shall suit the time when the play is performed, and it is either installation or coronation, according to present circumstances, forgetting that there are many expressions which set you back into the last century when the play was written.

Nothing seems fairer ground in a comedy than satirical allusions to the dress in fashion where it lies open to remark or ridicule ; and yet, this is of so transitory a nature, that when the mode changes, the wit vanishes. There are many passages in Cibbers’s plays, and in others of the same age, that owe all their smartness to the character being dressed in a full-bottomed

bottomed flaxen periwig. When the farce of *Lethe* first made its appearance, dressed hair and a queue were considered as marks of a coxcomb.—Says *Æsop*, “let me advise you to lay aside your *wings* and your *tail* for they undoubtedly eclipse your manhood”—this has now lost its satire.

However, the local and temporary wit which we dislike in the play, we applaud in the prologue or epilogue, where it is in its proper place.

In writing, as in painting, all productions of the higher class must scorn to depend upon any particular country or age for their propriety. The characters of *Lear* or *Falstaffe*, tho’ as great contrasts as can be found in the whole range of human nature, are both formed upon general principles, so that they are equally excellent now, as when they were first exhibited, and they will produce the utmost effect of  
tragedy

tragedy and comedy as long as our language endures. This would not be the case if either were the portrait of an individual ; like other portraits they would appear uninteresting, and even ridiculous, when their dress ceased to be that of the present day.

Local, and temporary allusions then, not only lose their intended effect, but produce a bad one, as soon as the circumstances vanish to which they owe their original.

Adieu, &c.

LETTER

## LETTER VIII.

**T**RUE, my friend, musicians do commit strange absurdities by way of expression—but fanciful people make them commit others which they never thought of.

The most common mistake of composers is to express words and not ideas. This is generally the case with Purcel, and frequently the case with Handel. I believe there is not a single piece existing of the former, if it has a word to be played upon, but will prove my assertion : and the latter, if the impetuosity of the musical subject will give him leave, will at any time quit it for a pun. There is no trap so likely to catch composers as  
the

the words *high* and *low*, *down* and *up*.  
 “ By G— (as Quin says) they must bite.” In what raptures was Purcel when he set “ They that *go down* to the sea in ships.” How lucky a circumstance, that there was a finger at that time, who could *go down* to DD, and *go up* two octaves above? for there is in other parts of the anthem a going *up* as well as *down*. The whole is a constellation of beauties of this kind. Handel had leisure, at the conclusion of an excellent movement, to endeavour at an imitation of the rocking of a cradle. (See the end of the anthem “ My heart is inditing,”) and has his *ups* and *downs* too in plenty. If many examples of this may be found in these great geniuses, it would be endless to enumerate the instances of those of the lower order. Let it suffice to observe, that all operas without exception, the greatest part of church-music, and particularly Marcello’s psalms, abound in this ridiculous imitative expression.

E

This

This is trifling with the words and neglecting the sentiment ; but the fault is much increased when a word is expressed in contradiction to the sentiment. A most flagrant instance of this is in Boyce's Solomon, in the song of " Arise, my Fair-one, come away."—The hero of the piece is inviting his mistress to come to him, and to tempt her the more, in describing the beauty of the spring, he tells her that

" Stern winter's *gone*, with all its train  
 " Of chilling frosts and dropping rain."

but it is *come*, in the music—the unlucky words of *winter*, *frost*, and *rain*, made the composer set the lover a shivering, when he was full of the feelings of the " genial ray !"

But sometimes expression of the sentiment is blameable, if such expression is improper for the general effect of the piece. Religious solemnity should not appear at  
 the

the theatre, nor theatrical levity at the church. In the *Stabat Mater* of Pergolesi, and in the *Messiah* of Handel, there is an expression of whipping attempted, which, if it be understood at all, conveys either a ludicrous or prophane idea, according to the disposition of the hearer. Permit me to suspend my remarks a moment, just to observe, that there is sometimes mention made in plays, of Providence, God, and other subjects, which are as incompatible with a place of public entertainment, as the common sentiments of plays are with the church. If we are disgusted at a theatrical preacher, we are not less offended when an actor heightens all these ill-placed sentiments—forcing them upon your notice by an affectation of a deep sense of religion, and most solemnly preaching the sermon which the poet so improperly wrote.

All these, and many more, are faults which musicians *really* commit ; but a

connoisseur will make them guilty of others, by way of compliment, which the composers never dreamt of. The introduction of the coronation anthem, *Zadok the Priest*, is an arpeggio, which Handel probably took from his own performance at the harpsichord ; but a great judge says, it is to express the murmurs of the people assembled in the abbey. “ *All we like sheep are gone astray*” in the Messiah, is considered as most excellently expressing the breaking out of sheep from a field. But out of pity to the connoisseurs, I will not increase my instances—God forbid I should rob any man of his criticism.

Left I should encroach upon *your* premises, I will quit such dangerous ground, and leave you with more celerity than ceremony.

LETTER

## LETTER IX.

I APPROVE every part of your poem except the parenthesis towards the conclusion. In the midst of a rapid description, or tender sentiment; or any thing that commands the attention, or attaches the heart; what is more disgusting than to have the image cut in two, for the sake of explaining a word, or removing an objection, which the reader may possibly make?

Milton and Shakespeare frequently interrupt the most lively and ardent passages—take some instances as they occur.

Their arms away they threw, and to the hills  
(For earth hath this variety from heav'n  
Of pleasure situate in hill or dale)  
Light as the lightning's glimpse they ran, they flew.

PAR. LOST, B. VI.

—when

—————when on a day  
 (For time, though in eternity, apply'd  
 To motion, measures all things durable  
 By present, past, and future) on such a day  
 As heaven's great year brings forth.

PAR. LOST, B. V.

—————evening now approach'd,  
 (For we have also our evening and our morn,  
 We ours for change delectable, not need)  
 Forthwith from dance to sweet repast they turn  
 Desirous; &c.

Upon the mention of *bills* in the first quotation, and of *day* and *evening* in the second and last—he knew that he had some objections to answer, and accordingly set about doing it for fear of the consequences—I wish they had remained in their full force.

Milton's general style in the *Paradise Lost* is so full of short parentheses, that the sense is perplexed, and the grandeur of the idea frequently destroyed. These are not marked nor pointed as such, which occasions a difficulty in the construction.

struction, and an interruption in the flow of the verse, reducing it to mere prose, and almost justifying the severe censures of a late critic.

You have often read the *Midsummer Night's Dream*—do you recollect this passage?

*Lyf. Hermia*, for ought that ever I could read,  
Could ever hear by tale or history,  
The course of true love never did run smooth;  
But, either it was different in blood——

*Her.* O cross! too high, to be enthrall'd to low!——

*Lyf.* Or else misgrafted in respect of years——

*Her.* O spite! too old, to be engag'd to young!

*Lyf.* Or else it stood upon the choice of friends——

*Her.* O hell! to chuse love by another's eye!

*Lyf.* Or if there were a sympathy in choice——

War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it.

With these interruptions the effect is entirely lost—without them, it becomes one of the finest passages in *Shakespeare*.

You will remember that it is the improper use of the parenthesis I object to,  
and

and not to the thing itself. “ This figure of composition, says a late ingenious author, which is hardly ever used in common discourse, is much employed by the best writers of antiquity, in order to give a cast and colour to their style different from common idiom, and by Demosthenes particularly; and not only by the orators, but the poets.”

I would recommend to your consideration, whether you had not better avoid giving any hint how the story of your poem is to conclude? Anticipation frequently spoils a fine incident. Æneas, reciting to Dido what passed at Troy, says

*Arduus armatos mediis in mænibus astans*

*Fundit equus.*

*Æn. II.*

The first mention of the Horse's having armed men within, should have been reserved for this place. There is something

thing truly terrible and sublime in Æneas being waked by such a variety of horrid sounds, and ignorant of the cause; the reader also should have been ignorant until Pantheus explained the mystery. See the whole passage in Æn. II. beginning at the 298th verse, and if possible, forget that this went before :

Delecta virum fortiti corpora furtim

Includunt cæco lateri, &c.

One of the finest parts of Don Quixote is also spoiled by mentioning a circumstance which should have been delayed. The Knight and his 'Squire, at the close of the day, hear the clank of chains, and dreadful blows, which would have puzzled the reader as much as it frightened them, had not the author unluckily said, " that the strokes were in *time* and *measure*," which is telling us very plainly that it was a mill. The whole scene is highly picturesque and beautiful.

As

As the effect of a passage is spoiled by anticipation, so is it by protraction—by being continued after the thought and expression are finished. Thus when the Ghost of Ajax turns indignant from Ulysses, not deigning a reply, it is a noble instance of the sublime in character \*; and

\* Most of these *silences* are mere affectation. “Were ever sorrow, and misery, and compassion, (I abridge the passage from *The Adventurer*) more forcibly expressed than by Job’s friends who sat down with him seven nights? &c. Let us confess that this is superior to the description of parental sorrow in *Æschylus*, who has represented Niobe sitting three days upon the tomb of her children, &c. Such silences are more affecting and expressive of passion than the most artful speeches. In *Sophocles*, when *Dejanira* discovers her mistake in sending the poisoned vestment to *Hercules*, her surprize and sorrow are unspeakable, and she goes off the stage without uttering a syllable, &c.”

Perhaps, in nature, if a father informed of the sudden death of a beloved son, was to say nothing, the silence would be more affecting than any reply, but it certainly has not the same effect on the stage.

There

and here, to produce effect, should have been the conclusion of the incident. But when Ulysses adds, that tho' Ajax was so angry, he would have tried to make him speak, if he had not wished to see some other ghosts; the sensation is so much abased, that we accuse Ulysses of wanting heroic feeling, and almost fancy that the poet himself was not sensible of his own sublimity.

No writer knew so well when, and how, to finish a passage as Voltaire. The ma-

*There*, it seems, not as if grief had taken away the power of utterance, but that the poet was deficient in invention. The tragedy of Agis has a circumstance of this sort, but it was so far from producing the effect intended, that the audience considered it as a poor trick, and had "great dispositions to laugh." Job's friends sitting down with him in silence, as a *relation* of something that had happened, is affecting; but, represent it on the stage, and it becomes ridiculous. I do not see the sublimity of sitting silent for seven days together. If this long, *impossible*, time is sublime, then it would be more sublime if the seven days had been fourteen—but we are never taken in by such things.

gic of his style, in great measure, depends upon his attention to this principle. Every sentence has something in the turn of it which marks a termination—a paragraph more particularly so; and a chapter, or book, are most strongly marked of all.

There are instances of an abrupt termination producing a bad effect. The *Æneid* certainly wants a finish—there is too much left to be supposed—we may say this, without approving of a thirteenth book added by another poet. The most complete catastrophe of a story is that of *Tom Jones*, which is the best invented, the best conducted, and the best finished fable that the wit of man has yet produced.

If these hints will be of any service to you, it will be a great pleasure to

Yours, &c.

LETTER

## LETTER X.

THE productions of genius require some ages to be brought to perfection. The liberal arts have their infancy, youth, and manhood ; and, to carry on the allusion, continue some time in a state of strength, and then verge by degrees to a decline, which at last ends in a total extinction. The English language, poetry, and music, exhibit proofs of this observation, as far as they have hitherto gone : with the two former I have at present nothing to do, but shall confine what I have to say on this subject, to the latter.

What the music of the times preceding Harry the eighth was, I confess myself ignorant, nor indeed is the knowledge of  
it

it necessary; we may conclude that it was more barbarous than that of the sixteenth century, as the times in which it was used were less enlightened. Some masses, mottets, and madrigals are what have reached us, consisting merely in a succession of chords without art or meaning, and perfectly destitute of air.

In Elizabeth's reign appeared some composers, Tallis, Bird, Morley, and Farrant, who improved the barren style of their predecessors: they had more choice in their harmony; and made some little advances in melody. There were some pieces of instrumental music composed at this time which still exist: particularly a book of lessons, for the virginals, which was the Queen's.—Whether the composers thought that her sacred Majesty excelled in musical abilities as much as in rank, or as she wished to do in beauty, I know not; but this is certain, that these pieces are so crowded with

with parts, and so awkwardly barbarous, as to render the performance of them impossible—so natural is it, even in the infancy of art, to mistake difficulty for beauty.

I do not recollect any composer that really improved music for the first half of the seventeenth century, except Orlando Gibbons ; of whom a service for the church, and two or three anthems remain, the harmony of which is good, and the melody, for the times, pleasing. In the Gloria Patri of the Nunc Dimittis is the best canon, in my judgment, that was ever made. Gibbons was also a composer for the virginals, but in no respect better than his predecessors. I believe it was about this time that the species of canon called the catch, was produced. The intent of my making this short recapitulation of the former state of music, is purely prefatory to what I have to say upon the subject of catches.

This odd species of composition, whenever invented, was brought to its perfection by Purcel. Real music was as yet in its childhood ; but the reign of Charles the second carried every kind of vulgar debauchery to its height : the proper æra for the birth of such pieces as “ when quartered, have ever three parts obscenity, and one part music.”

The definition of a catch is a piece for three or more voices, one of which leads, and the others follow in the same notes. It must be so contrived, that rests (which are made for that purpose) in the music of one line, be filled up with a word or two from another line ; these form a cross-purpose or catch, from whence the name. Now, this piece of wit is not judged perfect, if the result be not the rankest indecency.

Perhaps this definition may be objected to, and I may be told that there are  
catches

catches perfectly harmless. It is true that some pieces are called catches that have nothing to offend, and others that may justly pretend to please; but they want what is absolutely necessary for a catch—the break, and cross-purpose.

It may also be said, that the result of the break is not always indecency. I confess, there are catches upon other subjects: drunkenness is a favourite one; which, though good, is not so *very* good as the other: and there may possibly be found one or two upon other topicks, which might be heard without disgust; but these are not sufficient to contradict a general rule, or make me retract what I have advanced.

I will next examine their musical merit.—And this, as compositions, must consist either in their harmony, or melody; or their effect in performance.

The harmony of a catch is nothing more than the common result of filling up a chord.—There is not contrivance enough to make it esteemed as a piece of ingenuity. “What! they are all canons!” So is every tune in the world, if you will set it in three or more parts, and sing these parts in succession, as a catch—but a *real* canon is not so easily produced: it is one of those difficult trifles which costs an infinite deal of labour, and after all is worth nothing. The excellence in the composition of a catch consists in making the breaks, and filling them up properly. The melody is, for the most part, the unimproved vulgar drawl of the times of ignorance.

Let us next attend to the manner of performance. One voice leads, a second follows, and a third, &c. succeeds, unaccompanied with any instrument to keep them in tune together. The consequence is, that the voices are always sinking;  
but

but not equally, for the best finger will keep nearest the pitch, and the others depart farthest from it. If the parts are doubled, which is sometimes the case, all these defects are multiplied. To this, let there be added the imperfect scale of an uncultivated voice, the *departing* from the real sound by way of humour, the noise of so many people striving to out-sing each other, the confusion of speaking different words at the same time, and all this heightened by the laughing and other accompaniments of the audience—it presents such a scene of savage folly, as would not disgrace the Hottentots indeed, but is not much to the credit of a company of civilized people.

As the catch in a manner owed its existence to a drunken club, of which some musicians were members; upon their dying, it languished for years, and was scarce known except among choir-men, who now and then kept up the spirit of

their forefathers. As the age grew more polished, a better style of music appeared. Corelli gave a new turn to instrumental music, and was successfully followed by Geminiani and Handel; the last excellent in vocal as well as instrumental music.

There have been refinements and confessed improvements upon all these great men since; and at this time there are much better performers, and certainly more elegant, though perhaps less solid composers.

Now, if this were speculation only, is it credible that taste should revert to barbarism? Its natural death is, to be frittered away in false refinement; and yet, contrary to experience in every other instance, we have gone back a century, and catches flourish in the reign of George the third. There is a club composed of some of the first people in the kingdom, who meet professedly to hear this species of composition: they cultivate it and encourage

rage it with premiums. To obtain which, many composers, who ought to be above such nonsense, become candidates, and produce such things

—— “one knows not what to call,  
“ Their generation's so equivocal.”

Sometimes a piece makes its appearance that was lately found by accident, after a concealment of a hundred and fifty years. When it is approved, and declared too excellent for these degenerate days, the author smiles and owns it. I scarce ever saw one of these things that did not betray itself, within three bars, to be modern. All ancient music has an awkward barbarity in its first conception and structure, which, in these days of refinement, it is almost impossible to imitate, so as to deceive a real judge of the subject.

I profess that I never heard a catch sung, but I felt more ashamed than I can express,

prefs. I pretend to no more delicacy than that of the age I live in, which is very properly too refined to endure such barbarisms—I was ashamed for myself—for my company—and if a foreigner was present—for my country.

It has just occurred to me that you like catches, and frequently help to sing them—revenge yourself for the liberties I have taken, by compelling me to hear some of these pleasant ditties, when perhaps I may be forced to sing in my own defence.

Adieu! &c.

P. S. If you should have a design to convert me—take me to the catch-club.—I confess, and honour, the superior excellence of its performance, while I lament that so noble a subscription should be lavished for so poor a purpose as keeping alive musical false-wit, when it might  
so

so powerfully support and encourage the best style of composition ; and rather advance our taste by anticipating the improvement of the coming age, than force it back to times of barbarism, from which it has cost us such pains to emerge\*.

\* The subject of this letter has been much misunderstood. It is considered as a bitter Philippic against singing in parts, and musical effusions of mirth in company. The letter itself, warranting no such construction, is the only reply I shall make to this accusation ; except remarking, that it is not the *mirth* of the catch which is reprov'd, but its *vulgarity*.—Nor do the observations extend to those pieces in parts which are *not* catches, as has been imagined. Can it be supposed, that the author, who has published so many compositions for two, three, and four voices, would endeavour to establish principles to prevent their being performed, and make his own works the object of his satire ?

LETTER

## LETTER XI.

**I** Know you are one of those who consider our language as past its meridian. Some think it was in its highest lustre in the age of Sydney; others, in that of Addison. Perhaps upon an impartial review of it, we shall find it more perfect now than ever.

In the authors before the reign of Elizabeth, appears not the least pretence to a simple, natural style. A man was held unfit to write, who could not express his thoughts out of the common language; so that it is possible, that their contemporaries had as much difficulty to understand them, as ourselves. If we are to judge of the English they spoke, by what they writ, we have no reason to complain

plain of the fluctuation of our tongue. But it is very probable that conversation-language was much the same two hundred years ago as at present ; there are proofs of this in private letters still existing—I mean, from such people as had no ambition to be thought learned, or from such as felt too much for affectation. The famous letter of Anne Boleyn to Henry the eighth, is of this last sort, in which there is scarce an obsolete expression.—I hope you make a distinction between expression and spelling—for as I once observed to you, it is but of late that our orthography has been fixed. In the state-trials in Elizabeth and James's reign, we find nearly the same language that we use at present, and this was taken immediately from the mouth. In those passages where Shakespeare's genius had not its full scope, may be observed his attempts to be thought learned, and refined ; but where the subject was too impetuous to brook restraint, the language is as perfect

perfect as the idea. Upon the whole, tho' the colloquial English differed but little from the present, we may safely pronounce the style of the *authors* of this period to be barbarous.

The disputes between Charles the first and the Parliament, were of great use in polishing the language ; and though the King's papers are thought to be the most elegant, yet it is evident that both parties endeavoured at strength for the good of their cause, and at perspicuity for the sake of being universally understood—and these two principles go near towards making a perfect style. Milton's prose is in general very nervous, but it is not free from stiffness and affectation.

The other period is that of Addison. He was undoubtedly one of our smoothest and best writers ; he had the skill of uniting ease, with correctness, and more improved the language than the united labour

labours of fifty years before him.—  
 But yet, there were some little remains of  
 barbarism still left, which are evident  
 enough in his contemporaries, and may  
 be discovered even in him, by attending  
 to the style and not to the matter. Will  
 you believe that so elegant a writer has  
 used *authenticalness* for *authenticity*?—  
 You may find this horrid word in his  
 Dialogues on Medals.

Political disputes, though productive  
 of so many bad effects, have lately done  
 the same service as they did formerly—  
 they have improved our language. Those  
 in the Administration of Sir Robert  
 Walpole, but more particularly these in  
 our own times, have occasioned some of  
 the most perfect pieces of writing we have  
 in our tongue. Though, from the na-  
 ture of the subject, the pieces themselves  
 can scarcely exist longer than the dis-  
 pute which gave them being; yet certainly  
 their effect upon the language will be felt  
 when

when the quarrel itself is no more, and every thing relating to it forgotten.

Though I have affirmed that our language is more perfect now than in any past period—yet there is still much left in it to be corrected.

Nay, there are faults which arise from an affectation of correctness. “ This day (says an advertisement) *were* published Meditations of a silent Senator.”—If this be right, then “ This day *was* published Love’s Frailties,” must be wrong—but the reverse is the truth. “ This day *was* published (*a Book* called) Meditations, &c.”——“ *was* published (*a Comedy* called) Love’s Frailties”—and when the work I am now writing is advertised, it is not *Thirty Letters* which are published, but *a Book* is published with that title.

There are some defects in all languages,  
which

which have crept in by degrees, and are so sanctified by custom, that they can never be corrected. In English there is no difference in writing, tho' there is in pronouncing, the present, and preterperfect tenses of the verbs *read*, and *eat*, and some others. Some unsuccessful attempts have been made to distinguish them by writing *redde* and *ate*. There are more words in Latin of contrary significations, than, I believe, in any other language. It is a *defect* if the pronunciation of different words be alike, and a great fault if such pronunciation be the consequence of a refinement. We now pronounce *fore* and *four*, the same; which sometimes makes an odd confusion. "I will come to you at three, I can't come *before*"—and "I will come to you at three, I can't come *by four*"—are pronounced just the same, This we get by affectedly dropping the *u*. In French *au deffous* and *au deffus* are too much alike for contrary significations. Nature dictates a difference of

of sound for different meanings : the adverbs of negation and assent bear no resemblance to each other in any language ; and almost all languages agree in some such sound as *no* for denial.

The London dialect is the cause of many improprieties, which, if they were only used in conversation, would not be worthy of remark ; but as they have begun to make part of our written language, they deserve some animadversion. To mention a few. The custom among the common people of adding an *s* to many words, has, I believe, occasioned its being fixed to some, by writers of rank, who on account of their residence in London did not perceive the impropriety. They speak, and write, *chickens*—*coals*—*acquaintances*—*assurances*, &c. *Chicken* is itself the plural of *chick*, as *oxen* is of *ox*, *kine* (*cowen*) is of *cow*, and many others. *Coals* are properly the state of all fuel after it has ceased to flame, and

before it becomes ashes. *Coal* is the mineral so called, which (with *acquaintance* and *assistance*, being aggregate nouns) admits of no plural termination. If I were to say a bag of *shots*, or *sands*, the impropriety would be instantly perceived; and yet one is as correct as the other. A late author of great reputation, who has taken a strict, nay, a verbal review of the English language, uses them as often as they occur.

As the Londoners speak, so they also write *learn* for *teach*; this is a very old mistake, and occurs frequently in the psalms; *do* for *does* (and the contrary), *set* for *fit*, *see* for *saw*, *tin* for *latten* (which are two different things as well as words), *sulky* for *sullen*, &c. &c. 'Change and 'sample have been long admitted denizens.—Even in a dictionary you may find *million* explained to be a fruit well known—as perhaps in a future edition  
we

we shall be told that *fly* signifies a *coach*, and *dilly* a *chaise*.

The London *phraseology* has also been too hard for English. *I got me up—he sets him down—I got no sleep—I slept none*—such a thing is *a doing—a going—a coming—live lobsters—live cattle—I will call of you—do not tell on it*. All these are written without scruple. Our modern comedies, and the London newspapers, abound so much in this language, that they are scarcely intelligible to one who has never been in the capital. Nay in books for the use of schools, the London dialect is so predominant, that many of the sentences are not to be understood by a country boy, and impossible to be rendered into Latin even by those who do understand them. “ I will go and fetch a walk in the Green Park”—I will go get me my dinner,” and such jargon is perpetually occurring.

English

English has also been corrupted by London *emphasis* and *accent*—I will not tire you by quoting examples, of which a long list might be made, to prove the great propensity of the common people to those defects; and it would be a farther confirmation of what I advanced, that men of learning really commit improprieties because their ear is familiarized to them. The debates in Parliament, though certainly the best specimens of eloquence that the world can produce, have frequently given birth to barbarisms which are received into our language, and remain in it. Should an eminent speaker, in the hurry of declamation, coin a word, or use a bad phrase, it is taken up by others upon his authority. There is scarcely a session that does not produce something of this sort, which getting into the public papers, spreads over the kingdom, and soon becomes fixed too firmly to be ever removed.

G

I have

I have yet something to add on this subject—but I must caution you from imagining that because I find out the faults of others, I pretend to perfection myself. Hogarth says very properly in his Analysis of Beauty, “do not look for good drawing in those examples which I bring of grace and beauty—they are purposely neglected—attend to the pre-

2 attend to the precept

LETTER

## LETTER XII.

**I** Sometimes provoke you by sporting with matters which you deem sacred. Homer I know is one of your divinities—may I venture to tell you that I never could find that scale of heroes in the Iliad which critics admire as such a beauty?

Hector is supposed in valour superior to all but Achilles—upon what authority? Ajax certainly beat him in the single combat between them; and there are some instances, tho' I cannot recollect the passages, of his inferiority to others of the Greeks; which brings him down so low as to be scarcely worthy of falling by the arm of Achilles.

It is surely a blindness more than Homeric, not to see inconsistencies in the Iliad, and it is ridiculous to attempt to make beauties of them. From many which might easily be pointed out, take one or two as they occur to my memory. After describing Mars as the most terrible of beings, and to whom whole armies are as nothing; what *poetical* belief is strong enough to suppose he could be made to retire by Diomed? If Minerva's shield is so vast (the shell of a Kraken, I suppose), can one help wondering why she does not use it as the King of Laputa does his island, when his subjects on Terra-Firma rebel? It is not the hyperbole that offends, but the inconsistency. The poet had a right to form, and to endue his gods with what properties he pleased—he made them all-powerful; of course, resistance from mere mortals is ridiculous and impossible.

Milton

Milton also falsifies his scale of Heroism.—Satan, to preserve consistency, should be superior to all excepting Michael, and yet he is foiled by Abdiel. If Angels are to be considered as spirits, all fighting is ridiculous and absurd, because they cannot receive hurt from weapons, and for many other reasons. If they are to fight upon the principle of human beings; each must depend upon superior might and valour, and the most powerful ought to overcome. If Abdiel subdues Satan by divine assistance, then from the same cause he might have singly encountered and defeated the whole rebel army. By mixing the spiritual with the corporeal nature, the poet has given his Angels properties which cannot exist together.

But on another occasion, Milton has with much address prevented an inconsistency which seemed to be unavoidable.

When

When Gabriel meets Satan in Paradise, every event and reply promises an immediate combat : the “ horrid fray ” is prevented by a circumstance which most readers would think an ingenious improvement on the golden scales of Homer and Virgil. Voltaire quarrels with the whole incident, and calls the breaking off the fight a disappointment, and the manner by which it is done, puerile. But surely it is more consistent to hinder the encounter, than to bring on a contention which must either have destroyed the late creation, or lessened our idea of the might of the combatants.—Nay, I will go farther—if it had been consistent with the character of the Angels to have fought, and this globe to have remained unhurt ; it is better to prevent the combat, as it would have anticipated the war of the Angels in the sixth book, where there is also a single combat, which has a greater effect by being kept distinct from other incidents of the same kind.

So

So that our poet deserves praise rather than  
censure for the conduct of this incident ;  
which, in my judgment, possesses much  
originality and beauty.

LETTER

## LETTER XIII.

**Y**OU have not done me justice—read the memoirs I sent you *properly* before they are condemned:—what is any book if it be not read in that manner by which it may best be understood?

A novel, whose merit lies chiefly in the story, should be quickly passed through; for the closer you can bring the several circumstances together, the better. If its merit consists in character and sentiment, it should be read much slower; for the least obvious parts of a character are frequently the most beautiful, and the propriety of a sentiment may easily escape in a hasty perusal. Detached thoughts ought to be dwelt on longer than any other manner of writing; for  
different

different subjects quickly following each other, do rather confound than instruct; but if we allow ourselves time to reflect, we may understand the author, and perhaps improve ourselves. Each thought should be considered, as a text, upon which we ought to make a commentary.

Bayle's manner of writing by text and note is generally decried, but without reason. When there is a necessity of proving the assertion by quotation, which was his case, no other way can be taken equally perspicuous. The authorities must be produced somewhere—they cannot be in the text, and if they are put at the end of the book, which is the modern fashion, how much more troublesome are they for reference, than by being at the bottom of the page? The truth is, this is another instance of ignorance in the method of reading. Bayle, Harris, and other writers of this class, should have the text read first, which is quickly dis-

2

patched;

patched ; then, begin again and take in the notes. By these means you preserve a connection, and judge of the proofs of what is asserted.

I might in other respects complain of your treating me rather unfairly ; indeed, none judge less favourably of an author than his intimate friends—their personal knowledge of him as a man, destroys a many delusions to his advantage as an author.—“ Who is a hero to his Valet de Chambre ?” said the great Condé, and he might have added, “ or to his friends ?” Besides the obvious reason for this, it is most likely that an author has, in his common conversation, made his friends acquainted with his sentiments long before they are communicated to the public. The consequence is, that to *them* his work is not new ; and it is possible that they may take to themselves part of his merit ; for I have known many instances, where a person has been told  
some-

something by way of information, which he himself told the informer.

Permit me to add, tho' without any application to yourself, that an author's intimate acquaintance frequently do him more injury than avowed enemies. They shew so many apprehensions on his account—they so much dread the censure he may incur, and the enemies he may create by his new opinions, &c. All this betrays a want of confidence, and is very naturally set down to their knowing something of the author and his works, the world is not acquainted with.

It is certain, that the less personal acquaintance we have with an author, the greater is our esteem for his productions; we commend those the most, of whom we know the least. Upon the publication of the life of Charles the fifth, the praises due to its merit were liberally bestowed by some literati who were in company

company together. A Scottishman present, not joining with the rest, upon being asked the reason, replied—" I have seen Dr. Robertson a hundred times in Edinburgh."

## LETTER

## LETTER XIV.

\* \* \* \* \*

IT is so customary to mention Shakespeare and Jonson together, that many may think them of equal merit, tho' in different ways. In my opinion, Jonson is one of the dullest writers I ever read; and his plays, with some few exceptions, the most unentertaining I ever saw. His characters neither seem to be portraits, nor formed upon *general* ideas: we cannot fancy that there ever were or can be such people. Shakespeare's characters, have that appearance of reality which always has the effect of actual life, or at least what passes for it on the stage. Jonson has some shining passages now and then, but not enough to make

make up for his deficiencies. Shakespeare, on the contrary, abundantly repays us for being sometimes low and trifling.

His noble negligences teach  
 What others toil despair to reach,  
 He, perfect dancer, climbs the rope,  
 And balances your fear and hope :  
 If after some distinguish'd leap,  
 He drops his pole, and seems to slip ;  
 Straight gathering all his active strength,  
 He rises higher half his length !

Prior.

One of his commentators much admires his great art in the construction of his verses—I dare say they are very perfect ; but when reading this divine poet, it is as much out of my power to think upon the art of verse-making, as it is to consider the best way of twisting fiddle-strings at a concert. I am not sufficiently master of myself to do any thing that requires deliberation : I am hurried away  
 like

like a leaf in a whirlwind, and dropped at Thebes or Athens, as the poet pleases!

Although the pleasure arising from the representation of Shakespeare's plays is very great, yet the speeches which have any thing violent in the expression, are generally so over-acted as to cease to be the "mirror of nature"—but this was always the case—"Oh! it offends me to the soul, to see a robustious periwig-pated \* fellow tear a passion to tatters:"—tho' this is a "lamentable thing," yet it appears to be without remedy. An actor, in a large theatre, is like a picture hung at a distance, if the touches are delicate, they escape the sight: both must be extravagant to be seen at all, and hence the custom of the ancients to make use of the *Persona* and *Buskin*.

\* By this epithet, it is plain, that periwigs existed at least half a century before the time usually assigned for their invention.

Acting has a very different effect in the stage-box from what it has in the back of the gallery. In the one, every thing appears rough and rude, like a picture of Spagnolet's near the eye; in the other it is with difficulty that the play can be made out. Perhaps, the best place is the front of the first gallery; as being sufficiently removed to soften these hardnasses, yet near enough to see and hear with advantage.

The writing of a play is as much beyond nature as its performance. The plot must partake of the marvellous, the characters must be in situations too violent for common life, and speak a language unheard (but on the stage) in mirth or distress. There is a degree of improbability in the plot of our best tragedies, when reduced to the standard of nature. Otway's *Orphan*, and *Venice Preserved*; Rowe's *Tamerlane*, *Fair Penitent*, *Jane Shore*, and many others, suppose the ex-  
istence

istence of an impossibility as the foundation for the story. To carry on the plot, something is disclosed, which in real life would be kept secret ; or some information withheld which would always be given, and the distress seems to be *sought for*, not to *happen*. The observation from the gallery at the representation of *the Orphan* was natural—" By the speaking of three words all this might have been prevented."

The plot of the comedies of Congreve, Farquhar, Vanbrugh, &c., also consists of situations which cannot be supposed, and events, which in the usual course of things cannot arise. The characters also of both tragedy and comedy, are as far from resembling real people, as the business in which they are employed is out of the tract of common occurrences.

Shakespeare's plots are mostly taken  
H from

from historical facts, or from novels where the events are not so improbable as those fabricated for dramatic use, but they are for that reason more or less heightened. Those who think that his personages are natural, are deceived. If they were so, they would not be sufficiently marked for stage-effect. A strong proof of this is in the portrait of Lear, who is "four-score and upward." Were the character natural, Lear would be best acted by an old man: but every one must instantly perceive, that the strength as well as the abilities of the vigour of life are requisite for its due performance. So that when we commend plays for being natural, we mean dramatically so—but there is a great difference between heightening a situation or character which may exist, or have its foundation in nature, and that want of nature and foundation we perceive in most of the old writers.

I believe it will be found that all plots  
 3 and

and characters which interest us in plays are over-charged, and not real nature, but what the dramatic poets and the audience have agreed to consider as such. If we hit this point, our piece is perfect; if we come short, or exceed, it is flat or bombast.

## LETTER XV.

**P**RINTING was carried to a great degree of perfection soon after its discovery. The early Italian books are inferior to no modern ones in the essential principles of the art. Although some presses kept their credit, yet, by general inattention, at the beginning of this century, printing was brought down to the lowest pitch of barbarism. Since that time, in London, Paris, Madrid, Parma, and in other cities, arose a spirit of improvement, which, if it be on a good principle, may carry the art to its last degree of perfection; but, if on a bad one, may do much harm, for splendor sanctions faults in books as well as men.

To be better understood, let us endeavour to give a slight investigation of the  
true

true principles of printing, as far as relates to its use and beauty: we shall then be enabled to judge, whether the grand editions of some books lately published, have really any just pretensions to that superiority they seem to challenge.

Types for printing, should be made upon a scale of aliquot parts, which will give a proper proportion of height and breadth to the letters, and a due proportion to each other. If types are not formed upon a general principle, although each letter may be in itself good, yet they will appear to be of a different family.

If the proportion be too broad or too narrow, it will displease; but, if the best proportion be departed from, it is better to contract than to widen the letter.

Should there be any thing peculiar in the general form of the type, or, if the  
usual

usual form of any single letter be varied, it is always a change for the worse.

If the colour of the ink, or of the paper, be unusual ; or there be any other circumstance that solicits your attention from the author, to fix it upon the book ; it is a fault not to be excused by any pretence to ornament or elegance.

Admitting the truth of these principles, (which I do not wish to apply to particular books), it will be found, that gray ink, that a blue, yellow, or red cast on the paper, are alterations so evidently for the worse, as to be incompatible with elegance.—That the types of our modern splendid books, and most of the foreign as well, are not formed upon aliquot parts ; so that the letters disagree with each other, and have besides an affected sharpness and precision, which, nothing but the exactest proportion can excuse.—That Caslon's type is very perfect,

fect, but that in the Glasgow letter is united every desirable property, being by far the most beautiful of any yet invented. Specimens of all the varieties of these two last may be seen in Chambers's Dictionary, which will fully justify the preference here given them.

An acquaintance of ours has corresponded with a writing-master many years, not from any regard to the man, but for the pleasure he takes in seeing fine writing. He preserves his letters carefully, and though he *reads* them to none, (perhaps they are still unread by himself) he *shows* them to all who can relish the excellence of a flourish "long drawn out."—Our friend's taste may be ridiculed by those who "hold it a baseness to write fair," but yet it is certain that the true form of letters, in writing, is understood no where but in England. I never saw a specimen of a correct hand either written or engraved, from any other country, that was  
upon

upon a right principle. Perhaps it may be objected, that every nation, prejudiced in favour of its own particular manner, will say the same thing. Let us examine this.

Modern writing-hand had its rise from an endeavour to form the true letters as they are printed, with expedition. The first variation from the original, must be an oblique instead of a perpendicular situation, this naturally arises from the position of the hand—the next, a joining of the letters; these two necessarily produce a third, an alteration of the form. So that writing-hand differs from printing in this, that the former is an arrangement of *connected* characters, the latter of *distinct* ones. The slit in the pen makes the down-strokes full, and the up-strokes flight, so that the body of the letter is strong, and the joinings weak, as they should be. It is most natural and easy also to hold the pen always in the same position;  
by

by which means the full and hair-strokes are always in their right places. These seem the necessary consequence of endeavouring to make the letters expeditiously with a pen. The ornamental part comes next to be considered. For this, it is requisite that the letters should be of the same size and distance—their leaning should be in the same direction—the joining be, as much as possible, uniform—and, lastly, that the superadded ornament of flourishing, should be continued in the same position of the pen in which it was first begun (generally the reverse of the usual way of holding it), and that the forms be distinct, flowing, and graceful.

These appear to me the true principles of writing. Examine the Italian and French hands by these rules, (some of the best specimens are the titles of prints, &c.) and the hand which they use will be found to be unconnected, full of unmeaning

meaning twists and curlings generally produced by altering the position of the pen, and, upon the whole, awkward, stiff, and ungraceful.

As they *now* write, we *did*, about seventy or eighty years since ; so that our present beautiful hand is a new one, and by its being used no where but in England, I must conclude it to be an English invention.

Believe me, in my best writing, and with my best wishes, ever

Yours, &c,

LETTER

## LETTER XVI.

I Have often reflected with great grief, that there is scarce any remarkable natural object in the sublime style, of which we have a drawing to be depended on. The cataract of Niagara.—The peak of Teneriffe, we know nothing of, but that the one is the greatest water-fall, and the other the highest single mountain in the world. It is true, Condamine says, that the Andes far surpass the peak of Teneriffe; more than a third—but, it should be considered, that the valley of Quito is 1600 fathoms above the sea, and that it is from the foot of the mountain that the eye judges of its height. The peak of Teneriffe rises at once, and has, comparatively, but a small base—so that, in  
appear-

appearance, it is the highest of mountains.

Teneriffe has been ascended by many, but described by none, for I cannot call these accounts descriptions, which would suit any other high mountain as well. Indeed, people generally visit such objects from other motives than a wish to satisfy curiosity, or increase knowledge. A party ascended this mountain about a hundred years ago—one of the company giving an account of their journey, says—"being at *la Stancha*, while the rest were spending their time *in cards*. &c. I made it my business to admire the strangeness and vastness of that great body,\*" &c. The

\* This may serve also as an additional proof of the great attraction of cards. (See Letter II.) Teneriffe they could see but that once—they might at any future time play at cards—but the love of gaming prevailed over curiosity, though it was to be gratified by one of the most sublime objects in nature.

cataract

cataract of Niagara is most excellently *described* by Mr. Kalm ; but all descriptions of visible objects come so short of a representation, and are necessarily so imperfect, that if ten different painters were to read Mr. Kalm's account of this amazing fall, and to draw it from his description, we should have as many different draughts as painters.

There must be some amazing scenes in Norway by Pontoppidan's descriptions, and in the Alps by Schuchtzers ; these writers, and many travellers give views of what they apprehend to be curious ; but draughts made without genius, or by genius without practice, can never give such resemblance as to convey a proper idea of objects. The view of Lombardy from the Alps—the Bay of Naples—the appearance of Genoa from the sea, &c. &c. are much talked of, but have never been drawn ; or if drawn, not published.

From

From this general censure I should except a View of Vesuvius by a pupil of Vernet's, and two Views of the Giant's Causeway in Ireland, but above all, Gaspar Pouffin's Pictures from Tivoli, and Views of the Glaciers by Pars, so admirably etched and engraved by Woollet. All these have something so characteristic, that we may be sure they give a proper idea of the scenes from whence they were taken.

Of the many thousands that are constantly going to the East-Indies, not one has published a drawing of the Cape of Good Hope, nor of Adam's Peak in Ceylon, nor of fifty other remarkable objects which are seen in that voyage.— I mean a *pietoresque* view, not a mere outline for the use of navigators, nor the unmeaning marks of a pencil directed by ignorance. I greatly suspect the so much commended draughts in Anson's voyage to be nothing but outlines filled up at random;

random ; and more than suspect, that many designs in some late publications of this sort, are mere inventions at home : and this is the more to be lamented, as every care was taken, in the last instance, that fiction might not be obtruded on us for reality.

Description frequently labours at giving an indistinct idea of an object which the mind might conceive at once from a good representation : and yet description has done wonders, especially when assisted by reflection and sentiment. I shall give an instance from Rousseau, expressing some beautiful and even picturesque circumstances, which it is out of the power of painting to furnish.

“ Non loin d’une montagne coupée qu’on appelle le Pas-de-l’Echelle, au-dessous du grand chemin taillé dans le roc, à l’endroit appelé Chailles court et bouillonne dans des gouffres affreux, une  
petite

petite riviere qui paroit avoir mis à les creuser des milliers de siècles. On a bordé le chemin d'un parapet pour prévenir les malheurs\*\*\*\*\* Bien appuyé sur le parapet, j'avançois le nez, & je restois là des heures entieres, entrevoyant de tems en tems cette écume & cette eau bleue dont j'entendois le mugissement à travers les cris des corbeaux & des oiseaux de proie qui voloient de roche en roche & de brouffaille en brouffaille, à cent toises au-dessous de moi. Dans les endroits où la pente étoit assez unie, & la brouffaille assez claire pour laisser passer des cailloux, j'en allois chercher au loin d'aussi gros que je les pouvois porter, je les rassemblois sur le parapet en pile; puis, les lançant l'un après l'autre, je me délectois à les voir rouler, bondir, & voler en mille éclats avant que d'atteindre le fond du précipice."

To say that the conclusion is equal to the famous verse describing the fall of the stone of Syfphus, would be as dangerous

gerous as the having a knock from it—  
but, in one we perceive the art of the  
poet; and in the other, the simple, un-  
sought-for expression of nature.

## I LETTER

## LETTER XVII.

IS there not something very fanciful in the analogy which some people have discovered between the arts? I do not deny the *commune quoddam vinculum*, but would keep the principle within its proper bounds.

Poetry and painting, I believe, are only allied to music and to each other; but music, besides having the above-named ladies for sisters, has astronomy and geometry for brothers, and grammar—for a cousin, at least.

The intervals of an octave have been made to illustrate the seven primitive rays of light, and the old planetary system. Seven is one of the mystical numbers—

it

it has hidden meanings and connections which are unknown but to those who are deep in the sciences—though we all know that there are seven wise masters, seven wise mistresses, seven wonders of the Peak, and seven wonders of the world.

Music is also supposed to have a command over the passions. This is a doctrine of great antiquity, and has existed to the present times. Timotheus in Dryden's ode, inspires Alexander with pity, love, rage, and every other passion to which the human heart is subject.

“What passion cannot music raise or quell?” says Pope; and the same thought has been so often expressed, and is now so generally adopted by all poets and writers on this subject, that it would be a bold attempt to contradict it, were there not an immediate appeal to our experience and feelings, which must be held superior to authority of ever so long prescription.

Thus supported then, I ask in my turn —“ What passion *can* music raise or quell?” Whoever felt himself affected, otherwise than with pleasure, at those strains which are supposed to inspire grief—rage—joy—or pity? and this, in a degree, equal to the goodness of the composition and performance. The effect of music, in this instance, is just the same as of poetry. We attend—are pleased—delighted—transported—and when the heart can bear no more, “ glow, tremble, and weep.” All these are but different degrees of pure *pleasure*. When a poet or musician has produced this last effect, he has attained the utmost in the power of poetry or music.

Tears being a general expression of grief, pain, and pity; and music, when in its perfection, producing them, has occasioned the mistake of its raising the passions of grief, &c. But tears, in fact, are nothing but the mechanical effect of

every strong affection of the heart, and produced by all the passions ; even joy and rage. It is this effect, and the pleasurable sensation together, which Ossian (ancient or modern as you please) calls “ the joy of grief.”—It is this effect, when produced by some grand image, which Dr. Blair, his critic, styles the “ sublime pathetic.” And this will explain why the tyrant shed tears at a tragedy of Euripides, who was insensible to the sufferings of his subjects.

I have chosen to illustrate these observations from poetry rather than from music, because it is more generally understood, and more easily quoted ; but the principle, though powerful in poetry, is certainly strongest in music. Painting does not impress the eye with any sensation of sufficient force to excite this effect.—I never saw tears shed by any person looking at a picture—  
hence

hence it may be justly inferred that the sensations from painting are less strong and tumultuous than those from poetry and music.

Adieu, &c.

LETTER

## LETTER XVIII.

YOUR pictures came safe—my opinion of them you will in part know from the following observations, which, though made on another occasion, are equally applicable to this.

There is in landscape-painting, and novel-writing, a fault committed by some of the best artists and authors, which is as yet unnamed, because perhaps unnoticed; permit me to call it a *bad association*.

In a landscape, it is not sufficient that  
all

all the objects are such as may well be found together.—In a story, it is not enough that the incidents are such as may well happen—it is necessary in both, that all the circumstances should be of the *same family*.

Suppose a landscape had for its subject one of Gaspar Poussin's Views of Tivoli—now, though there is nothing more natural than to find mills by running water, yet a mill is not an object that can possibly agree with the other parts of the picture. It is in a lower class.

If in a landscape of Ruysdale were introduced the ruins of a temple; tho' a temple may be properly placed in a wood near water, yet it does not suit the rustic simplicity of the pictures of this artist.—It belongs to objects of a superior class.—Give the mill to Ruysdale and the temple to Gaspar—all will be right.

These

These two painters were the most perfect in their different styles that ever existed. Both formed themselves upon the study of nature, both were correct, both excellent; and yet so totally different from each other, that there are scarce any parts of the pictures of the one, that will bear being introduced into those of the other.

Claude's magnificent ideas frequently betrayed him into *a bad association*.—Large grand masses of trees agree but ill with sea and ships, unless they are removed to a distance. They are objects of different classes.

Lambert, who formed himself upon the study of Gaspar, took his trees, rocks, and other circumstances from that master; but his buildings from the Gardener's huts at Newington, which is confounding

ing real grandeur with affected simplicity\*.

A story which proceeds upon a regular circumscribed plan, chiefly consisting of dialogue and sentiment, where the scene is laid in London, and the characters such as are natural to the place; has *a bad association* if the author goes to Africa in quest of adventures. On the other hand, a novel which sets out upon the principle of variety, and where a frequent change of place is necessary to the execution of the design; has *a bad association* if the author in any part of it quits adventure for sentiment or satire. And yet, this has been done by Fielding

\* An agreeable and truly distinguishing writer seems fully sensible of the principle of proper association—"A forest scene introduced as a picture is introduced with distinction, and calls for every appendage of grandeur, to harmonize with it. The cottage offends—it should be a castle, a bridge, an aqueduct, or some other object that suits its dignity."

and

and Smollet, two of our best novel-writers, who, either from not knowing this principle, or not attending to it, have mixed circumstances which should have been kept distinct, as they belong to classes of writing which cannot accord together.

LETTER

## LETTER XIX.

**T**HERE never was a poet more admired in his life, or more despised after his death than Quarles. He was patronized by the best of his age while living; and when dead, was first criticized, then condemned, and at last totally forgotten, unless some bard wanted a name of one syllable to fill up a list of miserable rhymers. Pope was the last who made this use of him, and at the same time in a note censured Benlowes for being his patron.

I think it is Sir Philip Sidney who says, that no piece was ever a favourite of the common people without merit,  
Now,

Now, though every thing I had heard of Quarles was much in his disfavour, I conceived that he might have something good in him, from my never seeing one of his books of Emblems that was not worn to rags; a sign of its being read a good deal, unless it may be imagined that it was so used by children in turning over the prints.

Be that as it may, I have perused as much of him as a very dirty tattered book would permit, and will risque the declaring, that where he is good, I know but few poets better. He has much genuine fire, is frequently happy in similes, admirable in epithets and compound words; smooth in his versification, so unlike the poets of his own age; and possessed that great qualification of keeping you in perpetual alarm, so very different from the elegant writers of the present times.

I have

I have run through his book of Emblems to select some passages for your observation—they are buried, it must be confessed, in a heap of rubbish, but are of too much value not to be worth some pains in recovering.—Where Quarles is bad, “ he sounds the very base-string of humility”—but this may with equal truth be said of Shakespeare and Milton: I mean not to put him in the same rank with these two great poets; he has a much greater proportion of bad than is to be found in them, so much indeed, as almost to prevent the good from appearing at all\*. My intention is to clear some of his shining passages of their incumbrances; which may occasion their being noticed, and preserved from oblivion.

\* Notwithstanding this plain assertion, the author has been considered as an indiscriminate admirer of Quarles—from the same principle he may be considered as a censurer of Milton and Shakespeare—the one is as true as the other.

What

What think you of the following families ?

Look how the stricken hart that wounded flies  
 O'er hills and dales, and seeks the lower grounds  
 For running streams, the whilst his weeping eyes  
 Beg silent mercy \* from the following hounds ;  
 At length, embost, he droops, drops down, and lies  
 Beneath the burthen of his bleeding wounds :  
 Ev'n so my gasping soul, dissolv'd in tears, &c.

EMB. 11. BOOK IV.

Mark how the widow'd turtle, having lost  
 The faithful partner of her loyal heart,  
 Stretches her feeble wings from coast to coast,  
 Hunts ev'ry path ; thinks ev'ry shade doth part  
 Her absent love and her ; at length, unsped,  
 She re-betakes her to her lonely bed,  
 And there bewails her everlasting widow-hed †.

EMB. 12. BOOK IV.

Look

\* Although this circumstance has been often remarked, there seems a particular resemblance between this passage and one in Cotton's translation of Montaigne.—“ It frequently happens that the stag we hunt, finding himself weak and out of breath, seeing no other remedy, surrenders himself to us who pursue him, *imploring mercy by his tears.*”

—questuque cruentus

Atque imploranti similis.

† John Harington in a letter to his sister, written  
 in

Look how the sheep; whose rambling steps do stray  
 From the safe blessing of her shepherd's eyes,  
 Eftsoon becomes the unprotected prey  
 To the wing'd squadron of beleag'ring flies;  
 Where sweltered with the scorching beams of day  
 She frisks from bush to brake, and wildly flies away  
 From her own self, ev'n of herself afraid;  
 She shrouds her troubled brows in ev'ry glade,  
 And craves the mercy of the soft removing shade.

EMB. 14. BOOK IV.

The first will probably remind you of Shakespeare's description of the wounded stag in *As you like it*; which it may do, and not suffer by the comparison. The second, is very original in the expression—the circumstance of

in 1647, puts this and the following stanza into prose:

“ Doth not the widow'd turtle, lost to the faithful partner of her heart, stretch forth her feeble wing from coast to coast, in haunt of every path! at last betakes her to the lonely bed.”

“ Mark how the simple sheep, whose rambling steps do stray from the safe blessing of her shepherd's eye, becomes the unprotected prey of night-howling wolves; she frisks from bush to brake, &c.”

———thinks

——— thinks every *shade* doth part  
 Her absent love and her ———

is I believe new, and exquisitely tender.  
 There are others not much inferior to  
 these,

The following verses allude to the  
 print prefixed, where a bubble is repre-  
 sented as heavier than the globe. It is  
 necessary to observe, that the prints were  
 designed first, and the poems were in a  
 great measure explanatory of them.

Lord! what a world is this, which day and night  
 Men seek with so much toil, with so much trouble,  
 Which weigh'd in equal scales is found so light,  
 So poorly overbalanc'd, with a bubble?  
 Good God! that frantic mortals should destroy  
 Their higher hopes, and place their idle joy  
 Upon such airy trash, upon so light a toy!

\* \* \* \*

Thrice happy he, whose nobler thoughts despise  
 To make an object of so easy gains;  
 Thrice happy he, who scorns so poor a prize  
 Should be the crown of his heroic pains:

K

Thrice

Thrice happy he, that ne'er was born to try  
 Her frowns or smiles : or being born, did lie  
 In his sad nurse's arms an hour or two, and die.

EMB. 4. BOOK I.

Although mortality considered on the gloomy side, is not productive of much happiness, yet there are certain dispositions which feel some gratification in it—Quarles was one of these. He seizes all opportunities of abusing the world; and it must be confessed he has here done it in “choice and elegant terms.”

Sometimes he is more outrageous in his abuse.

Let wit, and all her studied plots effect  
 The best they can ;  
 Let smiling fortune prosper and perfect  
 What wit began ;  
 Let earth advise with both, and so project  
 A happy man ;  
 Let wit or fawning fortune vie their best ;  
 He may be blest  
 With all that earth can give ; but earth  
 Can give no rest.

EMB. 6. BOOK I.

Again—

False world, thou ly'st : thou can'st not lend

The least delight :

Thy favours cannot gain a friend,

They are so flight :

Thy morning-pleasures make an end

To please at night :

Poor are the wants that thou supply'st :

And yet thou vaunt'st, and yet thou vy'st

With heav'n ————.

EMB. 5. BOOK II.

The next quotation is an allusion to the print, where the world is made a mirror.

Believe her not, her glass diffuses

False portraitures ————

Were thy dimensions but a stride,

Nay, wert thou statur'd but a span,

Such as the long-bill'd troops defy'd,

A very fragment of a man!

Had surfeits, or th' ungracious star

Conspir'd to make one common place

Of all deformities that are

Within the volume of thy face,

She'd lend the favour thou'd out-move

The Troy-bane Helen, or the Queen of Love.

EMB. 6. BOOK II.

This is finely wrought up—Quarles perfectly comprehended the effect of the musical *crescendo*, which is instanced particularly in the last passage.

There is something very dreadful in the 4th line of this stanza.

See how the latter trumpet's dreadful blast  
 Affrights stout Mars his trembling son!  
 See how he startles! how he stands aghast,  
 And scrambles from his melting throne!  
 Hark! how the direful hand of vengeance tears  
 The swelt'ring clouds, whilst Heav'n appears  
 A circle fill'd with flame, and center'd with his fears

EMB. 9. Book II.

Dr. Young has some lines on this subject which are much admired.—But though the subject be the same, it is differently circumstanced.—Young's is a general description of the last judgment, Quarles describes its effect on a single being who is supposed to have lived fearless of such an event.

—————At

————— At the destin'd hour,  
 By the loud trumpet summon'd to the charge,  
 See all the formidable sons of fire,  
 Eruptions, earthquakes, comets, lightnings, play  
 Their various engines; all at once disgorge  
 Their blazing magazines; and take by storm  
 This poor terrestrial citadel of man.  
 Amazing period! when each mountain height  
 Out-burns Vesuvius! rocks eternal pour  
 Their melted mafs, as rivers once they pour'd;  
 Stars rush, and final *Ruin* fiercely drives  
 Her plough-share o'er creation.—————

Now to me, all this is a “ pestilent congregation of vapour.”—The formidable sons of fire spewing out blazing magazines—and *Ruin*, like a plough-man (or rather plough-woman) driving *her* plough-share—are mean, incoherent images. How much more sublimely Quarles expresses the same, and indeed some additional ones, in the last three lines?

In the print belonging to the emblem  
 from which the following passage is  
 taken,

taken, is a figure striking a globe with his knuckles.—The motto, *Tinnit, inane est.*

She's empty—hark! she sounds—there's nothing there  
     But noise to fill thy ear;  
 Thy vain enquiry can at length but find  
     A blast of murm'ring wind:  
 It is a cask, that seems as full as fair  
     But merely tun'd with air;  
 Fond youth, go build thy hopes on better grounds:  
     The soul that vainly sounds  
 Her joys upon this world, but feeds on empty sounds!

EMB. 10. BOOK II.

That you may not think the good passages of this poet are but scattered unequally through his poems; take some entire ones—or nearly so.

What sullen star rul'd my untimely birth,  
 That would not lend my days one hour of mirth?  
 How oft' have these bare knees been bent to gain  
 The slender alms of one poor smile in vain?  
 How often, tir'd with the fastidious light,  
 Have my faint lips implor'd the shades of night?  
 How often have my nightly torments pray'd  
 For ling'ring twilight, glutted with the shade?

Day

Day worse than night, night worse than day appears,  
 In sighs I spend my nights, my days in tears :  
 I moan unpity'd, groan without relief :  
 There is no end nor measure of my grief.  
 The smiling flow'r salutes the day; it grows  
 Untouch'd with care; it neither spins nor sows :  
 O that my tedious life were like this flow'r,  
 Or freed from grief, or finish'd with an hour :  
 Why was I born? why was I born a man?  
 And why proportioned by so large a span?  
 Or why suspended by the common lot,  
 And being born to die, why die I not?  
 Ah me! why is my sorrow-wasted breath  
 Deny'd the easy privilege of death?  
 The branded slave that tugs the weary oar,  
 Obtains the sabbath of a welcome shore.  
 His ransom'd stripes are heal'd; his native soil  
 Sweetens the mem'ry of his foreign toil :  
 But ah! my sorrows are not half so blest;  
 My labour finds no point, my pains no rest.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thou just observer of our flying hours,  
 That with thy adamantine fangs, devours  
 The brazen mon'uments of renowned kings,  
 Doth thy glass stand? or be thy moulting wings  
 Unapt to flie? if not, why dost thou spare  
 A willing breast; a breast that stands so fair?  
 A dying breast, that hath but only breath  
 To beg the wound, and strength to crave a death?  
 O that the pleas'd heav'ns would once dissolve  
 These fleshly fetters, that so fast involve

My

My hamper'd soul; then would my soul be blest  
From all those ills, and wrap her thoughts in rest!

\* \* \* \* \*

EMB. 15. BOOK III.

At other times he complains of the  
shortness of life, and in strains equally  
pathetic.

My glass is half unspent; forbear t' arrest  
My thriftless day too soon: my poor request  
Is that my glass may run but out the rest.

My time-devoured minutes will be done  
Without thy help; see—see how swift they run:  
Cut not my thread before my thread be spun.

The gain's not great I purchase by this stay;  
What loss sustain'st thou by so small delay,  
To whom ten thousand years are but a day?

My following eye can hardly make a shift  
To count my winged hours; they fly so swift,  
They scarce deserve the bounteous name of gift.

The secret wheels of hurrying time do give  
So short a warning, and so fast they drive,  
That I am dead before I seem to live.

And what's a life? a weary pilgrimage,  
Whose glory in one day doth fill the stage  
With childhood, manhood, and decrepit age.

And

And what's a life! the flourishing array  
Of the proud summer-meadow, which to-day  
Wears her green plush, and is to-morrow hay.

Read on this dial, how the shades devour  
My short-liv'd winter's day; hour eats up hour;  
Alas! the total's but from eight to four.

Behold these lilies, which thy hands have made  
Fair copies of my life, and open laid  
To view, how soon they droop, how soon they fade!

Shade not that dial, night will blind too soon;  
My non-aged day already points to noon;  
How simple is my suit! how small my boon!

Nor do I beg this slender inch, to while  
The time away, or falsely to beguile  
My thoughts with joy; here's nothing worth a smile.

No, no, 'tis not to please my wanton ears  
With frantic mirth; I beg but hours, not years:  
And what thou giv'st me, I will give to tears!

\* \* \* \* \*

EMB. 13. BOOK III.

“Read on *this* dial”—“Behold *these* lilies”—does not this put you in mind of the same form of expression in Ossian?  
“His spear was like *that* blasted fir.”

Quarles

Quarles was commenting on his print in which the dial and lilies were represented; Ossian saw his images “in his mind’s eye”—but both the poets considered them as really existing—at least, they make them exist to their readers. Perhaps you smile at my quoting Ossian as a real poet—the expression is poetical, whoever be the author.

“How the shades devour,” &c.  
Shakespeare has the same figure:

————— the tide  
*Eats* not the flats with more impetuous haste——

it is wonderfully expressive!

In what he calls his hieroglyphics, Quarles compares man to a taper, which furnishes him with a number of very striking allusions. It is at first unlighted, then a hand from heaven touches it with fire—the motto, *Nescius unde*.

This

This flame-expecting taper hath at length  
 Received fire, and now begins to burn :  
 It hath no vigour yet, it hath no strength ;  
 Apt to be puffed and quenched at every turn :  
 It was a gracious hand that thus endow'd  
 This snuff with flame : but mark, this hand doth  
 shroud

Itself from mortal eyes, and folds it in a cloud.

Thus man begins to live. An unknown flame  
 Quickens his finished organs, now possess'd  
 With motion ; and which motion doth proclaim  
 An active soul, though in a feeble breast :  
 But how, and when infus'd, ask not my pen ;  
 Here flies a cloud before the eyes of men,  
 I cannot tell thee how, nor canst thou tell me when.

Was it a parcel of celestial fire,  
 Infus'd by heav'n into this fleshly mould ?  
 Or was it, think you, made a soul entire ?  
 Then, was it new created, or of old ?  
 Or is't a propagated spark, rak'd out  
 From nature's embers ; while we go about  
 By reason to resolve, the more we raise a doubt.

If it be part of that celestial flame,  
 It must be ev'n as pure, as free from spot,  
 As that eternal fountain whence it came ;  
 If pure and spotless, then whence came the blot ?  
 Itself being pure, could not itself defile ;  
 Nor hath unactive matter pow'r to soil  
 Her pure and active form, as jars corrupt their oil.

Or

Or if it were created, tell me when?

If in the first six days, where kept till now?

Or if thy soul were new-created, then

Heav'n did not all at first, he had to do;

Six days expired, all creation ceast;

All kinds, ev'n from the greatest to the least,

Were finish'd and compleat before the day of rest.

But why should man, the Lord of creatures, want

That privilege which plants and beasts obtain?

Beasts bring forth beasts, and plant a perfect plant;

And ev'ry like brings forth her like again:

Shall fowls and fishes, beasts and plants convey

Life to their issue, and man less than they?

Shall these get living souls, and man dead lumps of clay?

Must human souls be generated then?—

My water ebbs; behold a rock is nigh:

If nature's work produce the souls of men,

Man's soul is mortal—all that's born must die.

What shall we then conclude! what sunshine will

Disperse this gloomy cloud? till then, be still

My vainly striving thoughts; lie down my puzzled quill.

HIEROGLYPH. 2.

The closeness of the reasoning, and the freedom of the verses cannot be enough admired. I believe it would be difficult, if not impossible, to reason so shortly, and yet so clearly in prose. Pope says,

says, the thoughts in his Essay on Man are more compressed by being in verse—Poetical language admitting of elisions, and other varieties, inconsistent with the character of prose.

This poem is followed by another, before which is a design of the winds blowing the flame of the taper, with this motto, “ *The wind passeth over it, and it is gone!* ”

No sooner is this lighted Taper set  
 Upon the transitory stage  
 Of eye-bedark'ning night,  
 But it is straight subjected to the threat  
 Of envious winds, whose wasteful rage  
 Disturbs her peaceful light,  
 And makes her substance waste, and makes her flame  
 [less bright.

No sooner are we born, no sooner come  
 To take possession of this vast,  
 This soul-afflicting earth,  
 But danger meets us at the very womb;  
 And sorrow with her full-mouth'd blast  
 Salutes our painful birth  
 To put out all our joys, and puff out all our mirth.

Nor

Nor infant innocence, nor childish tears,  
 Nor youthful wit, nor manly pow'r,  
 Nor politic old age,  
 Nor virgins pleading, nor the widow's pray'rs,  
 Nor lowly cell, nor lofty tow'r,  
 Nor prince, nor peer, nor page,  
 Can 'scape this common blast, nor curb her stormy rage.

\* \* \* \* \*

Toft to and fro, our frighted thoughts are driv'n  
 With ev'ry puff, with ev'ry tide  
 Of life-consuming care;  
 Our peaceful flame, that would point up to heav'n  
 Is still disturb'd and turn'd aside;  
 And ev'ry blast of air  
 Commits such waste in man, as man cannot repair.

\* \* \* \* \*

What may this sorrow-shaken life present  
 To the false relish of our taste  
 That's worth the name of sweet?  
 Her minute's pleasure's choak'd with discontent,  
 Her glory foil'd with ev'ry blast—  
 How many dangers meet  
 Poor man betwixt the biggin and the winding sheet!

HIEROGLYPH. 3.

Tho' I have purposely omitted pointing out many of the particular beauties of these poems, I would wish you to observe,

observe, in this last, the fine effect of compound words in which this author is so happy: also the noble swell in the third stanza—the application of his allegory to its meaning, in the fourth, where the expression so admirably accords with both, “*our peaceful flame* \*,” &c.—if these are not genuine strokes of genius, I must, as a great critic says on a like occasion, acknowledge my ignorance of such subjects. I wish we had some word in our language to express the same idea in poetry as *crescendo* does in music; *swell* is applied to so many other purposes, that it has not the effect of an appropriated term.

\* An author, who probably knew nothing of Quarles, has made a beautiful use of this figure—

“ Une religion pure, aidée par des mœurs chastes,  
les dirigeoit vers une autre vie comme la flamme qui  
s’envole vers le ciel lorsqu’elle n’a plus d’aliment sur  
la terre.”

But

But for the present I must quit the subject—in a little time expect the remainder of my observations on this poet.

LETTER

## LETTER XX.

EVERY one seems to be satisfied that warm colouring is essential to a good picture: but what *is* warm colouring is not determined. Some have joined the idea of warmth to yellow, others to red, others to the compound of both, the orange—they also differ in the degrees of each. A warm picture to some, is cold to others; and vice versa. Lambert's idea of warmth, was to make his pictures appear as if they were behind a yellow glass. Vanbloom's have a red glass before them. Both's an orange colour. Each has its admirers, who condemn the rest.

Who shall decide when Doctors disagree?

L

Nature.

Nature. All these hues are right as *particulars*, but wrong as *universals*.

Let us examine the different appearances of light from the dawn to noon. The first break of day is a cold light in the East—this, by degrees, is tinged with purple, which grows redder and redder until the purple is lost in orange—the orange in yellow, and before the sun is two degrees high, the yellow is changed to white. Invert the order of these, and it is the coming on of the evening. All these hues then exist in nature, and one is as proper as the other.

It is necessary to distinguish between the painter's *warmth*, and the sensation. A picture, possessing most warmth of colouring, represents that time of the day when we feel least. A true representation of noon must have no tinge of yellow or red in the sky; and yet from its being noon, one might be led to imagine

gine it must be *warm*. It is the critic, and not the artist, who confounds the meaning of these terms.

In like manner, summer and winter, in respect to light, are the same; the sun rises and sets as gorgeously in December, if the weather be clear, as in June. I remember seeing two pictures of Cuyp, companions—one, a cattle piece in summer; the other, winter with figures skating. The sky in both was equally *warm*, for which the painter was much censured by an auction-connoisseur, who declared that it was impossible the sky could be *warm* in winter.

I believe it is a common mistake to apply the red and purple tints to the morning, and the orange and yellow to the evening. We hear pictures of Claude called mornings and evenings, which may be either. It is really odd enough, that there should not be a single circum-

stance to distinguish the morning from the evening, unless it be in a view of a particular place—in this case, the reversing of the light shews the difference. In a picture, there is no distinction between going to, and returning from work, or milking—men ride, drive cattle, are fishing, &c. as well early as late \*.

These

\* An accurate judge of these subjects remarks, that “Landscape painters, in general, pay too little attention to the discriminations of morning and evening.—We are often at a loss to distinguish in pictures the rising from the setting sun, tho’ their characters are very different both in the lights and shadows. The ruddy lights indeed of the evening are more easily distinguished: but it is not perhaps always sufficiently observed, that the shadows of the evening are much less opaque than those of the morning. They may be brightened, perhaps, by the numberless rays floating in the atmosphere, which are incessantly reverberated in every direction; and may continue in action after the sun is set. Whereas in the morning, the rays of the preceding day having subsided, no object receives any  
light,

These considerations should soften the peremptory style of critics by profession, and extend their taste, which at present seems much confined. A picture may be too warm, too cold, too red, too yellow, to please an eye partial to a particular tint—but it ought to be remembered that all these hues are natural, and, in the hands of a real artist, all picturesque.

light, but from the immediate lustre of the sun. Whatever becomes of the theory, the fact, I believe, is well ascertained.”

GILPIN.

To endeavour the establishing my own opinion by confuting the doctrine advanced in this quotation, would be to depart from the principle I fixed for my conduct in the Advertisement prefixed to these Letters. But, doubtless, upon a revival of this passage, the ingenious author will perceive that a different opacity of shadows for morning and evening, as far as the art of painting is concerned, is merely ideal—and not less so than the unphilosophical notion with which it is supported.

LETTER

## LETTER XXI.

AT the revival of the arts, some evil genius, determined to retard the progress of painting, dictated this rule. “A picture should always have its horizon the height of the eye *that looks at it*—in nature, the eye being always the height of the horizon; therefore a picture will be most like nature that has its horizon the height of the *natural eye*.” One of the falsest rules that ever was founded on a false principle! and the more lamentable, as it has spoiled, in point of perspective, three parts of the historical pictures that have ever been painted.

As it is very difficult to destroy a rooted error, and as this is a most pernicious

nicious one, it is necessary to be full and particular.

When I say *eye* and *horizon*—the natural eye and horizon are meant. When the terms *artificial eye* and *artificial horizon* are used, the eye and the horizon represented in painting are to be understood. We must be clear in this distinction, for it is the confounding of the ideas expressed by these terms which has occasioned the mischief.

The eye, and the horizon, are always of the same height—therefore

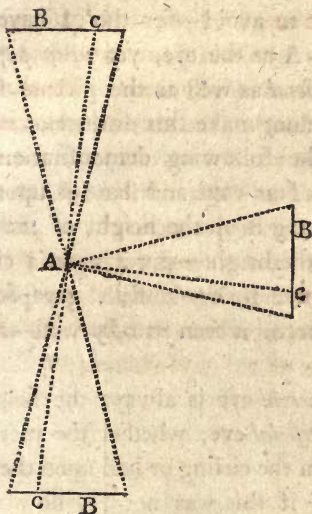
The artificial eye and the artificial horizon must always be so—but

There is no connection between the *real eye*, and the *artificial horizon*.

In every picture the artificial eye, or  
point

point of sight, is supposed to be at a certain height from the base-line; as high as a human figure would be, represented as standing there. To this point every thing in the picture tends, as every thing in a real view tends to the natural eye. The picture then, as far as this circumstance is concerned, is perfect, if the *artificial* eye and the *artificial* horizon go together; for these always bear the same relation to each other, let the picture be placed any where.

Let



Let A be the eye, B the picture (in section) and c the horizon of the picture. —The eye is always the apex of the cone; there is constantly the same relation between the parts, in every position. It must be observed, that there is a defect

fect in this illustration which it was impossible to avoid—for tho' I have considered A as the eye, yet *upon paper*, it is *artificial* as well as the picture B. If you cannot make this distinction, I propose the following demonstration.—Take a landscape and stand it upon a table—hang it up the height of the eye—above the height—put it upon a chair—upon the floor—it still, perspectively considered, is seen equally well—for

The *real* eye is always the height of the *artificial* eye, whether the picture be fixed in the cieling or laid upon the floor. Indeed if this was not so, how would it be possible to hang one picture over another? and yet this is done, and with the greatest propriety.

I have often lamented the shifts to which painters are reduced, who have followed this rule in opposition to their senses.

senses. Lareffe was so thoroughly possessed with it, that his idea of fitting up a room with pictures, was to have those which were below the eye to contain nothing but ground, and those which were above, the sky and clouds. But though he was convinced of the rectitude of his principle, he was struck with the oddity of the practice—he therefore recommended that there should be but one picture from the floor to the cieling, in which there might be a perfect coincidence of the natural and artificial horizon.

A portrait-painter sets the person he is to draw, generally the height of his eye.—Suppose it to be a whole-length with a landscape in the back-ground: the artist considers his picture is to hang above the eye, and for that reason makes his horizon low, about the height of the knees. The consequence is, that there are two points of sight, which supposes

an

an impossibility ; for the eye cannot be in two places at the same time. If the eye be supposed on a level with the head of the figure, as it was on drawing the face, then the back-ground is too low ; if equal to the horizon of the back-ground, then the figure is too high, unless we suppose it on an eminence, or ourselves in a pit ; in that case, instead of seeing the face in front, we must have looked under the chin—but as we do not, the figure always appears to be falling forward.

Raffaele's horizon is commonly the height of his figures, so that they stand properly, and seem to be, whether in a print or a picture, the size of human creatures ;—on the contrary, when the horizon is low, the figures always appear gigantic. In early life, I had formed so very exalted an idea of the size of running horses, from seeing them drawn with the distant hills appearing under their

their bodies, that the first time I was at a course, it appeared a mere rat-race.

Every whole-length picture will furnish you with an instance of this false principle, which would appear more disagreeable, if we were not in some measure reconciled to it by custom. I am aware that the practice of so many great men is a strong objection to my argument; but as the principle is ill founded, there ought to be no objection to its being abandoned.

## LETTER XXII.

**T**HE commentators of Shakespeare think themselves obliged to find some meaning in his nonsense; and to come at it, twist and turn his words without mercy: never considering, that in his scenes, as in common life, some part must be necessarily unimportant.

Many a passage has been criticised into consequence. The meaning, to use the Poet's words on a like occasion, "is like a grain of wheat hid in a bushel of chaff; you shall seek all day ere you find it, and when you have it, it is not worth the search."

An expression of Justice *Shallow's* in the second part of Henry the Fourth has  
been

been the subject of much criticism and hypercriticism. “ We will eat a last year’s pippin with a dish of carraways ;” and it is certain that there was such a dish ; but if Shakespeare had meant it, he would have said, “ A dish of last year’s pippins with carraways ”—“ *with* a dish, &c.” clearly means something distinct from the pippins. Roasted pippins stuck full of carraways, says one—carraway confect, or comfit well known to children, says another—as if every one did not know what carraway comfits were, says a third, laughing at the second. Dine with any of the *natural* inhabitants of Bath about Christmas, and they probably will give you after dinner a dish of pippins and carraways—which last, is the name of an apple as well known in that country, as nonpareil is in London, and as generally associated with golden pippins.

“ Then am I a fous’d gurnet,” says  
Falstaff.

Falstaff. This fish has puzzled the commentators as much as the apple did before.—What can it be?—I never heard of such a fish.—There is no such fish. A magazine critic, assured of its non-existence, proposed reading *grunt*; gurnet, quasi grunet, quasi grunt—well, and what do we get by that? Why, because hogs grunt, and pork is the flesh of hogs, sous'd gurnet means pickled pork! Very lately, a commentator, who once denied its existence, has discovered, in consequence of his great learning, that there is *really* such a fish—he is *really* in the right—if he will go to the South coast of Devonshire, he may see plenty of them—but not *sous'd*.

And now I mention Falstaff, let me explain his copper ring. He complains of being robbed when he was asleep, and “losing a seal-ring of his *grandfather's* worth forty marks.” “O Jesu,” says the hostess, “I have heard the  
prince

prince tell him I know not how oft, that the ring was *copper*." Is the appearance of copper so much like gold, that one may be mistaken for the other? Formerly, (about the time of Falstaff's grandfather) gold was a scarce commodity in England, so scarce, that they frequently made rings of copper, and plated them thinly with gold; I have seen two or three of them. As the look of both was alike, Falstaff might insist upon its being gold; on the contrary, the prince, from the quality of the wearer and lightness of the ring, might with equal fairness maintain that it was only plated.

Though it is not my intention to make one of the number of Shakespeare's commentators, I will take this opportunity of restoring a passage in King Lear. In the agony of his passion with his daughter, he says (in the modern editions)

M

"Th'

“Th’ *untented* woundings of a Father’s curse  
Pierce every sense about thee.”

In the old editions it is printed exceeding plainly, “Th’ *untender* woundings,” &c. that is, *not tender*, or *cruel*. It would be waste of time to shew its propriety, and that there is no such word as *untented*. Who first threw out the true reading and substituted the false, I know not. The word is often used by Shakspeare, and once at least besides in the same play, “so young and so *untender*?”

One more and I will release you.—  
Shylock says,

Some men there are, love not a gaping pig;  
Some that are mad, if they behold a cat;  
And others, when the bag-pipe sings in the nose,  
Cannot contain, &c.—for *affection*.

that is, because they are so *affected*.  
These poor lines have been new worded,  
new stopped, and all to find the mean-  
ing

ing of as plain a passage as can be written. "Some men cannot abide this thing, others have an aversion to another, which sometimes produces strange effects on their bodies, because their imagination is so strongly *affected*. Masterless passion (that is, a suffering or feeling which cannot be overcome) compels them to follow the impulse." The not understanding *affection* and *passion* in Shakespeare's quaint sense, has occasioned the difficulty.

Two qualifications are absolutely necessary for the commentators on our old poets—being versed in the authors of the times—and in the provincial dialects. There are many words and phrases occurring in these writers still used by the common people in the same sense as formerly, which would instantly explain passages that classic learning and modern refinement labour at in vain.

Two other qualifications are necessary for an editor of Shakespeare—a poetical imagination—and a discernment to distinguish what is probable from what is merely possible.

If the validity of these rules were admitted, and the different critics and commentators tried by them—“they must be used better than their desert to escape whipping.”

Shakespeare appears more like himself in the twenty plays published from the earliest editions (notwithstanding the many errors of the first transcribers and printers) than in Warburton's edition, where so much critical acumen is so ill directed; or in Johnson's first edition, in which, perhaps, there is not a single faulty passage corrected, or difficult one explained. Farmer's essay is the most satisfactory piece of criticism that has yet appeared on Shakespeare; and if  
other

other critics had equal merit in those parts which are not included in that design, there would be nothing left to desire for making a correct and compleat edition of this great author.

TASTE, like wit, was never taught, but is naturally bestowed, although every one knows, or fancies he knows, what it is. I will not add to the number of definitions, lest mine should be still unnecessary and prejudice my doctrine; but I will endeavour, by a few unconnected observations, to give my ideas on this difficult subject.

The term taste, no doubt, was originally taken from the sensation of the palate; it is now equally applied to that faculty of the mind which distinguishes what is elegant. Its progress is the same in both: for, as the palate is at first only

LETTER

## LETTER XXIII.

**T**ASTE, like wit, was never satisfactorily defined, although every one knows, or fancies he knows, what it is. I will not add to the number of definitions, lest mine should be also unsatisfactory and prejudice my doctrine; but I will endeavour, by a few unconnected observations, to give my ideas on this difficult subject.

The term taste, no doubt, was originally taken from the sensation of the palate; it is now equally applied to that faculty of the mind which distinguishes what is elegant. Its progress is the same in both: for, as the palate is at first only affected by powerful sensations, and after-

afterwards grows delicate; so the mental taste in the beginning relishes nothing but violent impressions, and afterwards becomes refined. Refinement produces the same effects both in our corporeal and mental taste—it makes us reject what we once approved.

Taste then is not a gift from nature, but an acquirement of art—nor is it easily acquired. Much attention and application are requisite before we can be truly said to possess this quality. A long and thorough acquaintance with the best authors ancient and modern, forms the taste for the Belles Lettres—and being conversant in the works of the great masters, forms the taste for the Polite Arts. It is necessary to know how the most distinguished persons have thought on these subjects, before we can be sure of the truth of our own principles,

Yet, it is certain that all these circumstances

stances united, will not alone confer taste—there must be an aptitude to receive the impression, which does not more depend on ourselves, than on the period in which we live. The English writers and artists a hundred and fifty years since, tho' they had the same classic authors to read, and the same ancient works of art to study as we have, yet were as deficient in taste as if these models of perfection had not existed.

Shakespeare and Milton had not taste—the finest passages of these great poets are very superior to any that writers of a polished age *can* produce; but they are such as no writer of a polished age *would* produce: for taste equally tends to abate extreme beauties, and great faults.

As a barbarous age is not the period for taste, so a refined state of society is not the æra of genius. An Epic Poem can never be again produced, possessing  
the

the true characteristic of that species of composition. It may be regular and beautiful like the *Æneid*, but not vehement and transporting like the *Iliad*.

Had not the civil wars interrupted the refinement that was dawning in the beginning of the reign of Charles the first, the *Paradise Lost* would not have been so grand—would not have been so mean, Voltaire's objections to this poem, are, for the most part, just—they are the objections of a man of taste to the productions of a man of genius. Upon the same principle, Goldsmith remarked, that Shakespeare's plays would not be endured if they were modern performances.

Voltaire always prefers Virgil to Homer, because the poem of the former is more refined, and more consonant to his own elegant ideas than that of the latter. The *Æneid* was composed when  
taste

taste was at its height in Rome, and of course it is beautiful and faultless: the Iliad was produced before taste existed in Greece, and for that reason it is bold and incorrect. If Virgil had possessed Homer's genius, the times in which he lived would not have permitted a poem like the Iliad—he would not have dared to express such bold ideas had he conceived them—and if Homer's had been the age of taste, his fire instead of blazing, might never have kindled.

Taste was much farther advanced in Italy when Tasso writ his *Gierusalemme Liberata*, than it was in England when Milton composed his *Paradise Lost*; which accounts for the different character of the two poems. The latter has great faults and transcendent beauties—the former seldom rises much above mediocrity, but never sinks below it.

The early and great progress of taste in  
France

France has long incapacitated every poet of that country for any epic production. It is not the want of genius, but the state of society which renders it impossible to produce a work whose characteristic is fire and sublimity. The *Henriade* possesses the elegance of a polished age, not the irregular boldness of barbarous times. I have purposely given a variety of instances more firmly to establish what I have advanced.

When writers of a refined age affect the style of barbarous antiquity, they should first divest themselves of taste—the impossibility of doing this instantly discovers the cheat. If this principle had been considered, a dispute which some time since much engaged the public attention would soon have been ended; for an affectation of ancient orthography, and a few old words with new applications, would never have weighed a moment against modern phraseology, modern

modern manners, and modern facts. What has existed may be imitated, but nothing less than the gift of prescience can dive into futurity.—If it be improbable that an uneducated lad should be able to produce what are called Rowley's Poems, it is impossible that Rowley could write with taste, and allude to facts of after times.

Taste has not only abated our genius, but it has also softened our behaviour, and had its effect upon most circumstances in life. Every thing that shews a boldness of feeling is subdued—all peculiarities that mark distinction are avoided; so that persons are nearly on a level in company, tho' their talents may be materially different. Endeavours to excel are rather repressed, for we avoid those subjects with which we are most acquainted, especially if professional, that we may not be thought pedants.

Sterne was a prodigy.—By daring to think for himself, and, what is more, daring to express his thoughts, he naturally belongs to a different period of society than that in which he lived—But it is worthy observation, how every thing in him like learning, is brought down and familiarized by the manner in which he writes. The deep philosopher, to escape suspicion, appears as a shallow jester.—“ Using his folly like a stalking horse, and under the presentation of that, shoots his wit\*.”

We may conclude then, that by the progress of taste all great exertions of genius are repressed; but that we have gained in correctness and elegance, what we have lost in force and sublimity.

\* This was written before the publication of his Plagiaries from Burton, &c. but they do not affect this part of his character.

LETTER

## LETTER XXIV.

I Cannot agree with you in the cause of that uncommon production you mention ; my idea of this subject, and on some others connected with it, will appear by the following reflections.

Until the last hundred years or thereabout, it was supposed that in many instances life was produced by putrefaction, fermentation, &c. Leuwenhoek and other naturalists, clearly demonstrated that some animals, which were supposed to owe their existence to the above causes, or in other words, to spontaneous generation, had really a regular production. This discovery established the general principle of *omnia ab ovo*—but it must be received with reserve and exception.

After

After giving every theory of the earth a patient reading, it seems to me probable that the whole world was originally covered with water to the depth of about three miles, which is about as much below the surface, as the highest mountains rise above it. This depth, though far below all soundings, bears no more proportion to the earth's diameter, than that of the paper it is covered with, does to a common globe. The idea of the sea approaching the center, and of course possessing a superior share in quantity, as well as surface of the earth, has occasioned many difficulties in accounting for the balance between the different sides of the globe; which vanish, if the sea is not supposed of a greater depth than necessity requires, or reason and probability warrant.

I consider all continents as a congeries of islands heaved up from the bottom of the  
the

the sea by different causes \*. Modern philosophers have discovered ancient volcanos where they were never suspected to have existed; and the whole earth is full of evidence that it was once beneath

\* Islands seem to owe their origin to three different causes—distinct volcanic elevations—banks of coral—or pieces of land separated from the continent. Islands of a pyramidal form, or consisting of many sugar-loaf hills, belong to the first species—the flat islands in the South Sea to the second—and to the third, Terra del Fuego in South America, Ceylon in the East Indies; and, to come nearer home, the Isle of Wight, the Western Isles of Scotland, Ireland, and even Great Britain itself; all which perhaps were once part of the continent. In the same manner as the sea has separated the Western Isles of Scotland; it is at this instant working its way through other pieces of land, which, in time, will become islands. The ingenious Mr. Mills observes, that the maps place the situation of the Western Isles different from the truth. The fact is, that the sea has encroached so far as to demolish the old boundaries and headlands. He mentions cliffs that are fallen, and others about to follow: which is the case with the South-West coast of Ireland as well——But this subject, if pursued, would lead me too far.

the

the ocean. Marble, freestone, and many other substances, abound in sea-shells and marine productions. Some imagine that the sea has left many places which it once covered. Is it not rather to be supposed that these places have been elevated above the sea, than that the sea has sunk below them? There seems to be no cause in nature equal to altering the quantity of water in the ocean, but we know that there are many causes by which the land may be elevated. If the sea had retired from the land, the retiring must have been equal in all places; this we are sure is not the case, therefore it is the land in that particular place that must have been raised.

In the manner I suppose all land to have been first brought to light, many islands have been produced in our own time, particularly in the range between Vesuvius and Ætna—some in the neighbourhood of Iceland, and coral banks

N

without

without number. What was under the water is forced above it. The marine substances on the surface by degrees decay ; moss appears, grass succeeds, then the smaller kind of plants, bushes, and trees \*. Animal life begins and goes on upon the same scale from the minuter, to beings of more consequence †. This system is at least as general as the other,

\* “ By soaking of frequent showers, and the course of waters from the higher into lower grounds, when there is no issue, the flat land grows to be a mixture of earth and water, which is called a marsh. The higher, and so the drier, parts, moistened by the rain, and warmed by the sun, shoot forth some sorts of plants, as naturally as bodies do hair, which being preserved by the desolateness of a place untrodden, grow to such trees or shrubs as are natural to the soil, and those in time producing both food and shelter for several kind of beasts, make what we call a forest.”

SIR W. TEMPLE.

† It is remarkable that this idea of the order of production agrees with the succession of organized beings in the Mosaic account of the Creation.—It is the more remarkable, as the author was unconscious of the coincidence.

but, like that, must be received with many restrictions ; for it is certain that by far the greater part of vegetables and animals would never be found indigenous or self-produced in any one place, tho' many might live, and indeed flourish, if brought there from the spots where they first had existence \*.

Let

\* Similar causes produce like effects.—Thus a lake on a mountain in Scotland shall have the same sort of fish in it as one in parallel circumstances in Switzerland, or any other mountainous country, where all variety arising from latitude is made the same by different elevations.—The char is found in lakes a thousand leagues asunder, and it is agreed that these fish cannot be transported from the water of their birth to another—if they could, who is to do it?—Plants are upon the same principle, and are indigenous in places equally circumstanced. Mr. Saunders, who travelled from Bengal to Thibet, found on the mountains the same plants as would be produced in like situations in Europe, even to the commonest weeds ; among a great number, the *arbutus uva ursi* is mentioned, which is a native of Scotland, of the Alps, and Canada.—It should be remarked, that these mountains stand in countries in

Let us proceed from reasoning to facts. Some voyager discovers an island evidently formed by a volcano, and very remote from other countries ; it is a perfect wood to the water's edge, has some plants which exist no where but in that spot, together with others common to places in the same latitude. It is full of insects, reptiles, birds, and sometimes quadrupeds. Now, if *every one* of those organized bodies was not brought there, something must be self-produced, or there must be an after-act of creation for that particular spot.

In some islands of the East-Indies are serpents of an enormous size ; who could carry them there ? In all streams are fish—how could they get there ? Not from the sea, for fish which inhabit the source which none of these plants are to be found, so that the idea of seeds being waisted by the winds from one place to another cannot in these instances be supposed.

of

of rivers are as soon killed by salt water as in air, besides there are many rivers which do not run into the ocean\*. Perhaps this circumstance was never sufficiently considered. Every set of rivers is perfectly distinct from any other set. The greater number have some fish that exist no where but in the particular stream in which they are bred. Pools of rain in warm countries presently swarm with fish. Many animals and plants exist only in one spot, if the place of their habitation be peculiar—such as the gigantic snails of a fountain in Abyssinia, the crabs of another fountain near the Cape, and more particularly still, the fish that inhabit the boiling streams which issue from Mount Hecla. Find any other cause for their first production than what must be taken from the old philosophy; for if they exist no where else, there is

\* In Persia are many rivers abounding in fish, which are all exhausted in watering grounds.

no place from whence they can be brought.

Let us attend to what we have always near us. Fill a vessel with water from the pump: it is pure, and contains neither animal, nor vegetable. After standing some days, a green substance begins to be formed in it, and which is afterwards inhabited by myriads of little beings: this seems the first step towards plants and animals. We are told indeed that the animalcules are from eggs laid by flies, and the green slime is a plant which has its proper seed. That the water may accidentally receive both eggs and seed is highly probable; but these (by reasoning from other instances) seem the first efforts towards vegetable and animal life. Besides, it yet remains to be proved, that the air so abounds with flying feeds and insects. If the air swarmed, as is supposed, vision would be obstructed (as by a fog, which con-

sists

sists of particles inconceivably small), and perhaps life, in the nobler animals, destroyed. The slime to be produced from feed then must have come from some of the same sort in the neighbourhood ; besides, if its being produced in the water depended upon accident, which it does by this supposition, it must sometimes fail. Again, if the animals and vegetables, in the above instance, were from eggs floating in the air, why are the smallest always produced first ? Must it not sometimes happen that ova of a larger sort would precede the smaller ? which is never the case : not to mention the total impossibility of some ova, particularly of animals, being so conveyed.

It is well known that by pepper-water, and a variety of other mixtures, peculiar animalcules are produced. Can we suppose that the fly, which lays the egg from which this creature exists, continues floating in the air until some philosopher

losopher makes a mixture proper for its deposit ? Is it done often enough to preserve the species ? What must the fly have done before pepper was brought from India ? You may tell me that the egg was deposited there—well then, if the eggs are not hurt by the pepper being dried in an oven, happen to be brought to Europe, and fall in the way of a naturalist, the species is preserved. Much is not got by this. There is great reason for believing that the animalcule was really produced by the infusion, and did not exist before.

How are the worms in human bodies to be accounted for ? There are some, no doubt, which bear an outward resemblance to earth-worms, and are supposed to be eggs we take in with roots, vegetables, &c. Not to insist upon the impossibility of a creature intended to live in the cold earth existing in the hot stomach, it is an invariable rule in the animal

animal œconomy for the stomach to digest or reject every thing that it receives. Animals when swallowed alive, do not remain so long, but are instantly begun to be digested. No animal can live in the stomach that ever lived out of it; besides we well know that there are worms in the intestines which have no resemblance to any other thing in the creation—the jointed worm, for instance, which is found of many yards in length. Where does this animal exist except in the stomach where it is found? Sheep, dogs, horses, &c. breed worms peculiar to themselves\*. I have seen frequently between the sound and back-bone of a whiting, long-worms that were evidently bred there. Having no system to support, I shall not object to your accounting for

\* There was lately found in the aqueous humour of a horse's eye a creature unlike any other—previous to the discovering a passage for the egg to such an unlikely place, the existence of the parent itself is necessary.

these facts according to the present philosophy—but to me it seems absolutely impossible\*.

If

\* The following curious passage from Atkins's Voyage is so much to the purpose, that I must not be deterred by its length from inserting it.

“ We killed three or four pelicans, and on opening their bodies, met with the same circumstances.

“ I. They had double ventricles that together reached the length of their bodies ; to the bottom of which were connected the small guts, about twice as thick as a small goose-quill.

“ II. In the first ventricle or craw, the fish they had swallowed (seventy or more) the bigness of smaller sprats, lay whole and unaltered.

“ III. In the lower ventricle, those little fish changing to a paler colour, were, nigh the fund of it mashed and macerated, and (what was principally meant by reciting any observations) here also the mass or pulp had an intimate mixture of numbers of slender lively worms in it ; which to me was a matter of speculation, for finding no such insects

in

If two people's agreeing in the same thing, without a communication of sen-

in the small fish above, which I imputed at first might have been their prey, I concluded it here to be the common accident of concoction, a certain consequence of heat and putrefaction, which are conquered by farther digestion, and pass into insensibility again; for the small guts after a little distance from the stomach had none, or rather made part of a yellow chylous substance.

“Query. Whether other, or all creatures have not such a principle of concoction more or less discernible in some than others; though imperceptible, and differently shaped and coloured, as the nature of the food swallowed, and the strength and heat of the animal swallowing?”

Upon this account I would remark, that as the worms appeared in the same place, in the same circumstances in all the birds, it may be inferred that they were not accidental, but made part of the œconomy of the animal.

That their not being found above or below one particular spot, evidently shews that they have their existence only there.—For if they had been part of the fish, like them they would have been digested.

timents,

timents, be a presumption for its truth ;  
 I can produce you a passage from Dr.  
 Tyson (as I find it in the Philosophical  
 Transactions), whose authority will be a  
 strong support to what I have advanced.  
 —“ The curious researches of many in-  
 quisitive persons after the manner of the  
 generation of insects, and their discove-  
 ries therein, have much advanced the  
 doctrine of *univocal generation*. Yet,  
 one great difficulty remains with me, how  
 to account for several of those that are  
 bred in animal bodies ; not such as we  
 may suppose to be hatched from the eggs  
 of the like kind, that are received with  
 the food or otherways, *but those of which*  
*we cannot meet with a parallel, or of the*  
*same species out of the body, in the whole*  
*world, as is known, besides.* I shall only  
 instance in two, the *Lumbricus Latus*,  
 and *Teres*, which remarkably differ from  
 any others out of the body, from whence,  
 or from the seed of the same, it may be  
 any

any ways thought they may be propagated in it\*."

Every thing I have advanced on self-production may be strengthened with additional arguments, and those from instances on the largest scale. The old and new continents are two immense islands. You will get little by supposing them once joined at Beyring's Straits. What should induce those animals which are never seen out of a hot climate, to travel so far North as the Strait between the continents? They do not approach it now.

\* If I were disposed to make quotations to this purpose, there are enough to be found in every writer on these subjects of the last century, and in many of the present, who were never stigmatized as materialists, or supposed to want a proper sense of religion for discussing a point of natural philosophy. "In debates (says the ingenious author of *The World*) perhaps purely speculative, a person is obliged not only to defend the point in controversy, but even his understanding and moral character, which are united to the question by the *management of his adversaries.*"

Besides

Besides, has not each continent some creatures peculiar to itself? Did those in America come from countries where no such animals exist? if they did not, and are found in America only—what is the fair conclusion?

When an inhabitant of the old continent asks how America was peopled, why does the question stop there? how was it supplied with vegetables and animals? particularly river-fish; and whence came those creatures that exist no where else? Pray what is to hinder an American from reversing the question? When did our people, he may say, first migrate and give inhabitants to the Eastern world? What answer can be given to these questions consistent with the present system of philosophy?

There is something in the sound of self-production which seems like a contradiction. I mean nothing more by it, than

than that a vegetable or animal in many instances, first seems to exist by a different principle from that upon which the species is afterwards continued. As the term does not exactly express this, it may easily be perverted from the sense in which I wish to be understood\*.

By whatever means the universe was formed, there is nothing in this sense of self-production that shocks any system of belief. If it were the pleasure of our Creator, that some organized bodies should first exist (and our senses assure us that they do so exist) from a certain combination of circumstances, and their ex-

\* And it has been so perverted.—If I had used the term *indigenous* (which in fact means the same thing) no sin or absurdity would have been committed, because *indigenous* is an admitted term for all *local productions*—but do we not here

Compound for words we are inclin'd to,  
By damning those we have no mind to?

istence

istence be continued afterwards upon different principles ; are we to say that those things are contrary to nature, because *other* organized bodies are not so formed ? The Polypus possesses properties which belong to no other Being that has come to our knowledge. Must its peculiarity destroy our belief that there is such a creature ? Must we deny that it has such wonderful properties, because they do not agree with the common principles of life ? It is easier, and perhaps wiser, to form our system from what we really see, than from what we only suppose ; especially if such suppositions contradict the knowledge derived from experience.— Perhaps we shall find, that self-production shocks the imagination more or less according to the *size* of the thing produced. Who would not rather believe that cheese breeds mites, than that deserts produce elephants ? And yet, according to our present philosophy, the one is as possible as the other.

If

If the consequences I have drawn from these facts appear to you wrong, or the facts themselves ill-supported—convince me of my error, and the whole shall be retracted as freely as it is advanced by

Yours most faithfully, &c.

O

LETTER

## LETTER XXV.

**T**HOUGH I hate to set out upon the principle of word-hunting, yet it always gives me pleasure when by accident I can trace the meaning of a word or phrase to its source, and pursue it through its various changes to its present state. The pleasure is still greater, to mark the gradual refinement of language from obscurity and barbarism, until it arrives at precision and elegance. Our tongue, as every one knows, is a compound of many. The pains which William the Conqueror took to graft his Norman French upon it, succeeded in many in-

instances\*, and there are others where we may trace the dying away of the French by degrees, and the English resuming its old place. Chaucer in his character of the Monk, says

He was a lord full fat and *in good point*.

This is the remains of the French *embonpoint*, or as it was written then *en bon point*.—The phrase was wearing out in Chaucer's time, the *en bon* being translated, and *point* preserved. Now, the whole is translated, and we say *in good case*, or *plight*.—The original is also lost,

\* From Caxton's Vegetius it appears that the following words were in use in the reign of Henry the seventh:—*preu—droits—empyfed—entremete--volente--preyfed--juristes--poyfaunt—propice—foyson—domageable, &c.*—Some of these continued to the time of Shakespeare. Other words from their terminations seem to have been perfectly naturalized, such as *semblably—orguillous, &c.*

in “to make his beard;” and many other instances which occur in our old writers.

“The days are now a cock-stride longer,” say the country folks at Twelfth-day—and many have been the conjectures upon the derivation of this phrase (see the Gentleman’s Magazine). It is not cock-stride, but cock’s-tread. In the country, *tread* is pronounced *trede*, (not *tred*)—and in most of the Western counties, Devonshire excepted, *stride* has more of the *e* than *i* in its sound.—But the impossibility of expressing by any known signs the different provincial modifications of the sound of the vowels, has occasioned some strange mistakes when people of one county endeavour to write down an expression used in another. Our old poets, who generally used the dialect of the province where they resided, and spelt as well as they could with  
their

their own country vowels, have given birth to much laughable criticism.

*Help-mate* is an odd corruption. In the Book of Genesis it is said, “it is not good for man to be alone, I will make an help meet for him\*”—that is, an help *proper* for him—*meet* is an adjective. But these two words, like the first man and his help, soon became one, and of late have been corrected into *help-mate*.

As I was reading John Struys’s voyages the other day, I thought I discovered the original of the word, and perhaps of the liquor, punch; which, if I am right,

\* “And furthermore, when that our Lord had created Adam our former father, he said in this wise: It is not good to be a manne alone, make we an *helper* to himselfe semblable.” CHAUCER.—  
“His Majesty (Charles the first) became heir as well to his father’s virtues as to his kingdoms; God found out a companion *meet for him*, our gracious Queen, &c.”

Speech of Lord-keeper FINCH.

has

has nothing to do with that diverting personage in puppet-shews of the same name, from whom it is usually derived. Struys was at Gomroon in Persia, where he says, he drank—"A liquor much in use there, called *pale punshen*, being compounded of arak, sugar, and raisins, which is so bewitching that they cannot refrain from drinking it." I really believe he *forgot* to mention the water—for how in such a climate as the southern part of Persia it was possible to drink undiluted arak, I have no conception. The raisins have given place, and very properly, to lemons. But I had better leave this to its own merits.—I am afraid it will not bear too minute an examination—remember it is only *humbly* offered together with the other conjectures of

Yours, &c.

As Struys's Voyages is a scarce book, I might with great ease have practised

the common trick of authors, and introduced *water* into the quotation without fear of discovery. It being supposed that few will give themselves the trouble to turn to the original book to examine extracts; authors have been made to give evidence to facts, “of which they nothing know,” and to support systems which never had existence, but in the imagination of the writer who presses them into his service.

LETTER

## LETTER XXVI.

**A**LLITERATION very early made its appearance in English poetry. I have seen an old piece where it was intended to supply the place of rhyme: the terminations were different; but in every line were three or four words which begun with the same letter. This I suppose was thought a beauty.

Shakespeare in several places burlesques the improper use of Alliteration with great pleasantry. He might discountenance but he could not destroy the practice—

The Floor, faithless to the fuddled foot,  
of Thomson, and

His pray'r preferr'd to saints that cannot aid,  
His praise postpon'd and never to be paid,

of Cowper

are scarcely less ridiculous than Shakespeare's

Bravely broach'd his bloody boiling breast.

I believe wherever alliteration is *perceived*, it disgusts.

There is something very ridiculous in the pains of an author, when he is searching for a set of words beginning with the same letter: this surely argues a "lack of matter." A man who has *things* in his head, is never curious about *words*, unless it be those which express his meaning quickly and with precision\*.

I dare

\* The following passage from Cotton's Translation of Montaigne, seems to be the original of the above remark, but the author had never read Montaigne when these letters were first published. This may serve as a proof, that two persons may have the same thought, and, as in this instance, nearly the same expression. "I would have *things* so exceed, and wholly possess the imagination of him that speaks,

I dare say it cost Smollet as much time to fix upon the name *Roderick Random*, as to write some of the best parts in that sprightly and entertaining performance,—*Robert* and *Richard* were common, *Roger* and *Ralph* were vulgar—there was a necessity for a sounding uncommon name, and beginning with an *R*: at last, by a lucky chance *Roderick* occurred—and *Roderick* it is.—Do you think me fanciful? I call upon *Peregrine Pickle*, and *Ferdinand Count Fathom* to prove the contrary.

speaks, that he should have something else to do than to think of *words*. The language that I love is natural and plain, as well in writing as in speaking, and a sinewy and significant way of expressing a man's self—short and pithy, and not so elegant and artificial, as prompt and vehement.” Again—“ In language to study new phrases and to affect words that are not of current use, proceeds from a childish and scholastic ambition.” There are two authors of great distinction, Johnson and Gibbon, whose style is formed upon principles directly opposite to this opinion of Montaigne,

If

If we laugh at the hard-fought-for Alliteration of the poet and historian, may we not laugh a little louder at that of the comic dramatist? Can any language be less that of nature or common conversation, than strings of words beginning with an M or N? and yet this has been done by one who “ paints the Manners living as they rise.” It is surprising that so sprightly a genius as Foote, could submit to the drudgery of consulting his spelling-book for words proper to be paired—my three *ppp*’s put me in mind of a letter in the Student, in which *p* is predominant; it seems to have been written to burlesque the absurd practice of Alliteration, and is highly humorous and entertaining.

Will you give me leave to make an abrupt transition from Alliteration to *Literation*, and pardon me also for coining?

The

The Germans in pronouncing English, and writing it too, if they have not studied the language, almost constantly change *b* into *p*, *d* into *t*, *g* (hard) into *k*, *v* into *f*, and the reverse. This peculiarity of theirs, I find, upon recollection, is not confined to the English. In the Burletta of *La buona Figliuola*, the author makes his German character to say *trompetti* and *tampurri*; nay they serve their own language the same, as I have observed from their pronunciation of proper names of cities, &c. It seems difficult to account for this; but perhaps not more so, than for the trick of the French in giving an aspirate to those English words where there is none, and omitting it where it should be used.

This is more excusable in them than the same practice which has obtained with some among ourselves.—It is confined indeed to our own language; in any other we are not guilty of this incorrectness.

LETTER

## LETTER XXVII.

THOUGH superstition is pretty well laughed away, yet in some points it still exists in full force. The wedding-ring in coffee grounds—the coffin in the candle—the stranger in the fire, are marked by none but vulgar and foolish eyes. You see salt spilt—hear death-watches—owls hoot—dogs howl, and despise the omen—you are above it. But yet let me ask *you*, an enlightened philosopher—Whether you are above choice of seats at whist? Whether you have not really believed that your chance for winning was much bettered by taking the fortunate chairs, and of course obliging your adversaries to sit not in those of the scornful, but of the losers? When you quit the game on a run of ill luck, what is

is it but declaring your belief that the games already played have an influence upon those which are to come?

Each ticket in a lottery has an equal chance—do you think so? Number 1000 gained the great prize in the last lottery—now, confess honestly, that something within tells you, the same number can never win the great prize again—you would prefer every other number to it—and yet reason says, that all the tickets have an equal probability of success\*. In these instances, and many others, superstition, even in cultivated minds, will be always more than a match for truth.

A gentleman coming a passenger in a vessel from the West-Indies, finding it

\* Some years since a person divided the tickets of a lottery into classes—Those he stiled fortunate, were to have a superiority of prizes. His calculation was formed upon rejecting the numbers which had been fortunate in former lotteries.

more

more inconvenient to be shaved than to wear his beard, chose the latter—but he was not suffered to have his choice long—it was the unanimous opinion of the sailors, and indeed of the Captain as well, that there was not the least probability of a wind as long as this ominous beard was suffered to grow. They petitioned—they remonstrated, and at last prepared to cut the fatal hairs by violence. Now, as there is no operation at which it is so much the patient's interest to consent, as that of the barber—the gentleman quietly submitted—nor could the wind resist the potent spell, which instantly filled all their sails, and “wafted them merrily away.”

You see we have only got rid of *general* superstition, we still retain that which belongs to our particular profession or pursuits.

Adieu.

LETTER

## LETTER XXVIII.

I Have often tried to have a proper conception of vast space—great numbers—enormous size, and, as you may suppose, without success. But though I fail in getting a competent idea, I sometimes make an approach towards it, which is better than nothing.

The solar system is one of these sublime subjects, in the consideration of which I have frequently been lost. I never attempted to conceive the size of the sun, or the distance of saturn; the impossibility instantly repels the most daring imagination. No, all that I have attempted is, to judge of the proportion (upon any scale) that the sun and planets  
bear

bear to each other, in respect to size and distance.

At first sight, this seems easily done—Draw some concentric circles on a sheet of paper, make the sun the centre, and place the planets round in their order.—Or if you would have an idea of their motion also, look at an orrery. But a little examination will convince you, that this is doing nothing towards conceiving their size and distance in proportion to each other, which is the point sought. Nay, it is worse than nothing, for it imposes a falsity as a reality. Imagination by itself can do a great deal, if assisted it can do more, but if perverted, nothing. Let us try then to assist the imagination.

If the sun be only a million times bigger than the earth, it is plain that I cannot make two circles upon a sheet of paper (without considering any thing

P

about

about distance) that will bear this proportion to each other; and if this cannot be done for the earth, much less will it serve for other planets and moons, where the disproportion is greater.

—Let us take the floor of a large room—on this make a circle of two feet diameter for the sun—the size of the earth will be about a large pin's head. The distance of the sun from the earth is about eighty of the sun's diameters; if so, there must be a circle of three hundred and twenty feet diameter for the earth's orbit, which no room, nor indeed any other building, will contain.

Let us try a field—here we may put our sun, and draw the earth's orbit round. If we stand in the centre, (which we should do) the earth is too small to be seen. These difficulties occurring so soon, how will they encrease when we take in the superior planets?

The

The ingenious Ferguson endeavoured to assist our imagination, by supposing St. Paul's dome, in diameter one hundred and forty-five feet, to be the sun—upon this scale, Mercury is between nine and ten inches, and placed at the Tower; Venus near eighteen, at St. James's Palace; the Earth, eighteen, at Marybone; Mars ten, at Kensington; Jupiter fifteen feet, at Hampton-Court; and Saturn eleven feet and half, at Cliffden. Let us be on the top of the dome, and look for the planets where he has placed them. Do you think we could see any thing of Jupiter and Saturn? to say nothing of their moons—or that we could conceive properly the difference between four miles and twenty, when seen on a line? the four may be two, or one mile; and the twenty may be ten, or thirty, for ought we can judge by the appearance. All that we gain by this is, the knowing that a sheet of paper, or an orrery, give us wrong ideas; and that we cannot, by

any contrivance, put the size and distance of the planets upon a proportionable scale, so as to take in the whole with our eye or understanding \*.

We are as much at a loss to comprehend the slowness of their motion—I have not mistaken—I mean, slowness.—The performance of a circuit in six or twelve months, or twice as many years, gives no idea of swiftness; and yet this motion is called whirling—as if the planets went round their orbits like a top! Though quick and slow are comparative terms, we have ideas of each arising from the medium of the two, from observation, and common application, that do not stand in need of any comparison to be understood. The motion of a flea is quick; of a snail, slow; and the common walk of a man is

\* These difficulties are increased very considerably by the discovery of the new planet.

neither quick nor slow. Let us imagine an elephant to walk, and a flea to hop the same distance in the same time—would you hesitate to say that the motion of the one was slow, and the other quick? Swiftneſs or ſlowneſs does not depend upon the abſolute quantity of ground the animal paſſes in a certain time, but upon the relative quantity to its own ſize.

The earth is about eight minutes in moving the ſpace of one diameter, therefore its abſolute motion is ſlow—it is twenty-four hours making one revolution round its axis, which gives no idea of velocity. It is certain that if we were placed very near the earth (unaffected by its attraction) there would appear an exceeding quick change of ſurface—and ſo would the motion of a ſnail appear to an animalcule. The quantity of ſpace, when compared to any we can move in the ſame time, is vaſt, and the motion quick ;

quick; but when considered as belonging to a body of the size of a world, the motion is slow.

Suppose a common globe was turned round once in twenty-four hours—imagine an animal as much inferior to it in size as we are to the earth, placed, as I conceived the human spectator placed, to view the earth—would the apprehension of this Being induce you to call a single revolution in twenty-four hours, whirling? Would not you say, that though the surface passed swiftly in review before him, yet that the absolute motion of the whole was exceedingly slow? Perhaps it is our measuring the planetary progress by miles, that makes us conceive it to be quick; which is much like taking the height of a mountain in hairs-breadths. When we are told that Saturn moves in his orbit more than twenty-two thousand miles in an hour, we fancy the motion to be swift; but

but when we find that he is more than three hours moving his own diameter, we must then think it as it really is, slow. Bishop Wilkins is the only writer I have met with who considers the motion of the heavenly bodies as I do, and I am rather proud of having my opinion supported by so great a man.

There is another circumstance which prevents the solar system, as commonly delineated, from bearing a true resemblance to the apparent position and motion of the planets. It is always drawn in plan instead of section, whereas the *appearance* of the orbits of the heavenly bodies is always in section, and never can be in plan. This difference is not, as far as I know, noticed in any account of the solar system; and yet if it be not attended to, it is impossible to prove the truth of the system by the *apparent* paths of the planets.

This

This will be best understood by considering the inferior ones. Mercury and Venus remove to a certain distance from the sun, and then, after seeming at rest, they return in nearly the same line, and remove to the same distance on the other side, where the same thing is repeated. This to the eye is not a revolution in plan, but a revolution in section—and it might be explained by a draught which should always accompany the common delineation of the planetary orbits.

LETTER

## LETTER XXIX.

IT is so long since I sent you the first part of my observations on Quarles, that perhaps you have forgot my promise for the remainder.—I will now resume the subject.

Quarles sometimes introduces personages, and makes his poem of the dramatic cast. The sixth hieroglyphic is a dialogue between *Time* and *Death*; as usual, alluding to the print, where *Death* is about to extinguish the taper, but is prevented by *Time*. There are a few awkward expressions in this, which may be more easily overlooked than omitted.

*Time.*

*Time.**Death.*

*Time.* Behold the frailty of this slender snuff;  
 Alas! it hath not long to last;  
 Without the help of either chief or puff,  
 Her weakness knows the way to waste :  
 Nature hath made her substance apt enough  
 To spend itself, and spend too fast :  
 It needs the help of none  
 That is so prone  
 To lavish out untouch'd, and languish all alone.

*Death.* *Time*, hold thy peace, and shake thy slow-pac'd  
 [sand ;  
 Thine idle minutes make no way ;  
 Thy glass exceeds her hour, or else doth stand,  
 I cannot hold, I cannot stay.  
 Surcease my pleading, and enlarge my hand,  
 I surfeit with too long delay ;  
 This brisk this bold-fac'd light  
 Doth burn too bright :  
 Darkness adorns my throne, my day is darkest  
 [night.

*Time.* Great Prince of darkness! hold thy needless  
 [hand,  
 Thy captive's fast and cannot flee ;  
 What arm can rescue? who can countermand ?  
 What pow'r can set thy pris'ner free ?  
 Or if they could ; what close, what foreign land  
 Can hide that head that flees from thee?

But

But if her harmless light

Offend thy sight

Why need'st thou snatch at noon, what must be  
[thine at night ?

*Death.* I have outstaid my patience ; my quick trade

Grows dull and makes too slow return ;

This long-liv'd debt is due, and should been paid

When first her flame began to burn :

But I have staid too long, I have delay'd

To store my vast, my craving urn.

My patent gives me pow'r

Each day, each hour,

To strike the peasant's thatch, and shake the  
[princely tow'r.

*Time.* Thou count'st too fast : thy patent gives no pow'r

Till Time shall please to say, Amen.

*Death.* Canst thou appoint my shaft ? *Time.* Or thou my  
[hour ?

*Death.* 'Tis I bid, do. *Time.* 'Tis I bid, when ;

Alas ! thou canst not make the poorest flow'r

To hang the drooping head 'till then :

Thy shafts can neither kill,

Nor strike, until

My power gives them wings, and pleasure arms  
[thy will.

There is nothing which destroys the  
*reality* in a dramatic dialogue more than  
when the speakers ask questions and reply  
in

in an equal quantity of lines. Perhaps the most disgusting instance of this is in Milton's *Mask*, where Comus and the Lady have a verse each alternately, for fourteen lines together. We are more sensible of the sameness in quantity where it is so short, and so often repeated, than here in Quarles where it is extended to a stanza, and that repeated for each speaker but once—but even here you begin to feel its bad effect, when it is finely relieved towards the end by the characters growing warmer in their dispute, and, of course, making the speeches shorter.

Yet, what I here condemn, others admire.—You, who are so fond of the ancients, may easily defend this practice by their example, and if you want any assistance to demolish me, may call in Mr. West and the author of the *Origin and Progress of Language*.—The following passage of the former from his translation of the *Iphigenia* of Euripides

is

is quoted by the latter with great commendations—not indeed because the dialogue is in alternate verse, but because it is a fine imitation of the ancient trochaic measure.

*Iph.* Know'st thou what should now be ordered?

*Tho.* 'Tis thy office to prescribe.

*Iph.* Let them bind in chains the strangers.

*Tho.* Canst thou fear they should escape?

*Iph.* Trust no Greek; Greece is perfidious.

*Tho.* Slaves depart, and bind the Greeks.

*Iph.* Having bound, conduct them hither, &c.

It is true that here the reply wants one of having the same number of syllables as the question—but still, the constant return of the same quantity for each speaker is disagreeable to all unprejudiced ears.—You will tell me that it is in the high gusto of the antique, and that the feet are trochaics—I can only reply, that hard words cannot convince me when contrary to reason, and if a proper effect be not produced, it is of very little consequence to me whether the authority be brought from

Greece or Siberia. Horace's often-quoted *Pallida mors*, &c. was perhaps never better translated than at the end of the fourth stanza.

The ninth hieroglyphic will put you in mind of the poems that are squeezed or stretched into the form of axes, altars, and wings—but if you will attend to the matter and not the form, you will find it excellent—to write this properly requires some care.

*Behold*

How short a span  
Was long enough of old  
To measure out the life of man;  
In those well-temper'd days, his time was then  
Survey'd, cast up, and found but three-score years and ten!

*Alas!*

And what is that?  
They come, and slide, and pass,  
Before my pen can tell thee what.  
The posts of Time are swift, which having run  
Their sev'n short stages o'er, their short-liv'd task is done.

*Our*

*Our days*

Begun, we lend!  
 To sleep, to antick plays  
 And toys, until the first stage end;  
 12 waining moons twice 5 times told, we give  
 To unrecover'd loss: we rather breathe than live.

*We spend*

A ten years breath  
 Before we apprehend  
 What 'tis to live, or fear a Death:  
 Our childish dreams are fill'd with painted joys  
 Which please our sense awhile, and waking prove but toys!

*How vain*

How wretched is  
 Poor man, that doth remain  
 A slave to such a state as this!  
 His days are short, at longest; few at most;  
 They are but bad at best; yet lavish'd out, or lost.

*They be*

The secret springs  
 That make our minutes flee  
 On wheels more swift than eagle's wings?  
 Our life's a clock, and every gasp of breath  
 Breathes forth a warning grief, till Time shall strike a Death!

*How soon*

Our new-born light  
 Attains to full-ag'd noon!  
 And this, how soon to grey-hair'd night!  
 We spring, we bud, we blossom and we blast  
 E'er we can count our days, our days they flee so fast!

*They*

*They end*

When scarce begun !

And e'er we apprehend

That we begin to live, our life is done :

Man count thy days ; and if they fly too fast

For thy dull thoughts to count, count ev'ry day the last.

Methinks Quarles's ghost is at my elbow, and will not be appeased unless I remark that the first lines of each stanza make a verse, being the text on which the poem is a comment.

*Behold, alas ! our days we spend ;*

*How vain they be, how soon they end !*

This is a kind of false wit once much in request, particularly in Spain. In Don Quixote is a poem of this sort which is called by the translator a Text and Glos. It differs however from Quarles's, the text being introduced at the end, and not at the beginning of the stanza.

It is impossible to avoid smiling at the pains he must have taken to preserve the form

form of the stanza—in the third he is obliged to have the assistance of figures, or his line would have been too long ; and after all his trouble, there must be some for the reader before he has calculated the amount of “ twelve moons, twice five times told : ” in the rest, to say the truth, it is not so apparent. If this pyramidical stanza prevent you from attending to the poetry, it is easily put in another—of the two first lines make one ; and the false wit immediately vanishes.—I hope Quarles’s ghost vanished before I proposed the alteration.

I have, like a prudent caterer, reserved the best thing for the last. It is the twelfth emblem of the third book. The subject of the print is a figure trying to escape from the divine vengeance which is pursuing in thunders : the motto—*O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me in secret until thy wrath be past !* Upon this hint he

Q

has

has produced the following excellent poem.

\* Ah! whither shall I fly? what path untrod  
Shall I seek out to 'scape the flaming rod  
Of my offended, of my angry God?

Where shall I sojourn? what kind sea will hide  
My head from thunder? where shall I abide,  
Until his flames be quench'd or laid aside?

What if my feet should take their hasty flight,  
And seek protection in the shades of night?  
Alas! no shades can blind the God of light.

What if my soul should take the wings of day,  
And find some desert? if she spring away,  
The wings of vengeance clip as fast as they.

What, if some solid rock should entertain  
My frightened soul? can solid rocks restrain  
The stroke of Justice and not cleave in twain?

\* Mr. Cowper seems to have felt the force of these animated lines, by the following imitation:

Oh, for a shelter from the wrath to come;  
Crush me ye rocks, ye falling mountains hide,  
Or bury me in Ocean's angry tide.—

Nor sea, nor shade, nor shield, nor rock, nor cave,  
 Nor silent deserts, nor the fullen grave,  
 Where flame-ey'd fury means to smite, can save.

'Tis vain to flee; 'till gentle mercy shew  
 Her better eye; the farther off we go,  
 The swing of Justice deals the mightier blow.

Th' ingenuous child, corrected, doth not flee  
 His angry mother's hand, but clings more nigh,  
 And quenches with his tears her flaming eye.

Great God! there is no safety here below;  
 Thou art my fortress, thou that seem'st my foe,  
 'Tis thou that strik'st the stroke, must guard the blow.

Six stanzas, which though very good, yet being of less merit than the rest are omitted. It is obvious that he had the 139th psalm in his eye, of which he has made great use. The alarm at the beginning—the searching all nature for shelter—the impossibility of being hid from the author of nature—and the acquiescing at last in what was unavoidable, are grand and natural ideas. The motion of the

wings of vengeance—and the recapitulation of the places where protection was sought in vain—are instances of expression rarely met with. But what praise is sufficient for the simile in the eighth stanza? To say only that it is apposite and beautiful, comes very short of my sensations when I read it. Let me confess honestly, that I think it one of the noblest instances of the sublime pathetic! As a part of a religious poem it is proper, in a high degree; the scripture frequently considering our connection with the Almighty as that of children with a parent.—As a picturesque image it is distinct, natural, and affecting.—But to remark all the beauties of this poem would be to comment on every stanza.—You will have more pleasure in finding them out yourself.

Now, what think you, is not this rather too good to be lost?

Was

Was it from the number of false thoughts and the many instances of false wit in which Quarles so much abounds, that Pope had not patience to search for his beauties? and it is certain they are but few in proportion to his faults. It is not my intention to say more in his favour than may be defended by quotation. I think my praises strongly supported, but I do not expect that they will have sufficient force to turn a tide of abuse which has been flowing against this poet for more than an hundred years.

P, S. I should have informed you that these emblems were imitated in Latin by one Herman Hugo, a Jesuit. The first edition of them was in 1623, soon after the appearance of Quarles; and the book was reprinted for the ninth time in 1676, which last is the date of the copy in my possession. How many more editions there have been I know not. He makes no acknowledgment to Quarles,  
and

and speaks of his own work as original. As a specimen of his manner, take the following, which is intended as an imitation of “ Ah whither shall I fly ? ”

*Quis mihi securis dabit hospita tecta latebris ?*

*Tecta, quibus dextræ server ab igne tuæ ?*

*Heu ! tuus ante oculos quoties furor ille recurfat,*

*Nulla mihi toties fida sat antra reor.*

*Tunc ego secretas, umbracula frondea, sylvas,*

*Lustrâque solivagis opto relicta feris.*

*Tunc ego vel mediis timidum caput abdere terris,*

*Aut maris exesâ condere rupe velim, &c.*

It reads but poorly after the other, though I have given you the best passages: He afterwards by degrees quits his subject, runs into stuff about Cain and Jonah, and has entirely omitted the simile,

LETTER

## LETTER XXX.

FIVE hundred years since, old Hodge Bacon (as Butler calls him) wrote a treatise, *De Impedimentis Sapientiæ*—perhaps, he had to complain, in common with authors of a more modern date, that the rubs and difficulties which the public throw in the way of genius at its first appearance, are frequently too great to be surmounted.

We are apt to form our opinion of abilities by their resemblance to those by which fame has already been acquired. A painter, a musician, or an author perfectly new, we are afraid to commend—like hounds, we wait for the opening of one whose cry we may venture to follow. We have a reputation to lose by com-  
mending

mending in the wrong place ; and we have a reputation to gain by seeing something to censure that is unperceived by the common eye—We have prepossessions to overcome, old opinions to unfix, and new ones to establish, before we can fairly judge of *original* merit : and as this merit (to which I entirely confine the remark) is always accompanied with modesty, the possessor, instead of finding that encouragement and protection his abilities seem to demand, passes his life neglected, and is left to languish in hopeless obscurity.

The greatest part of those who seem to have been born to make mankind happy, were themselves miserable. If we know any thing of Homer, it is, that he wandered through Greece reciting his verses like a modern ballad-singer.—Wretched, unhappy, half-starved Cervantes, Camöens, Butler, Fielding ! Does it not grieve one to hear that the  
author

author of Tom Jones lies in the Factory's burying ground at Lisbon, undistinguished, unregarded—not a stone to mark the place \* ! while we behold stately memorials erected to some, who have done nothing to deserve, or who should have shunned the public attention—to others, who from some lucky concurrence of circumstances, have had credit with their contemporaries for abilities and virtues, which will not be acknowledged by posterity—and to others, whose very names were secret until they appeared in their epitaphs. Fortunately, these ill-merited distinctions are soon lost, and are rather considered as monuments to the fame of the sculptor, than of the persons whose dust they so pompously cover.

The instances of those original ge-

• It is said that the Members of the Royal Academy of Lisbon have lately ordered a monument to his memory.

niuses,

nuises, who in their life-time have enjoyed the applause of the public, and lived by it, are very few—indeed I cannot recollect any—Garrick excepted. I do not consider Virgil or Pope in this light—they are not original. It is true that Shakespeare lived well enough ; but the money he gained was by acting, not writing. Milton was in tolerable circumstances ; but if his whole dependence had been on the profit arising from the sale of the finest poem in the world, he must have been starved.

The Biographia Britannica is to me the most pathetic book in our language. If it record the learning and genius of many of our countrymen, it records also their disappointments, their poverty, their misery, and the spurns inflicted on them by the unworthy. As sure as you read the life of a man celebrated for his abilities, so certain you find that he had to combat with the world's oppression and persecution ;

persecution ; as if the interests of mankind were concerned in stifling a flame that would light them to virtue, knowledge, and happiness.

The mournful sensations arising from surveying tombs in the repositories of the dead, are pleasant when compared to what I feel on entering a large library ; which I consider as a vast collection of monuments to trouble and unrewarded merit. When I reflect on the labour necessary to produce the most inconsiderable volume, and multiply it by the whole number of books before me, I am lost under such an accumulation of human misery ! Perhaps, out of the thousands of authors which my eye so quickly glances over, not fifty had any other reward in their life-time, than amusing their imagination with vain notions of posterity bestowing the fame which was denied by their contemporaries. An author's first ideas undoubtedly are

are present rewards ; but he soon finds, that though death seems not essential to reputation, yet that life is too short to establish it. Impressed with these melancholy ideas, he exclaims with the Poet—

But the fair Guerdon when we hope to find,  
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
Comes the blind fury with th' abhorred shears,  
And flits the thin-spun life!——

THE END.







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